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LITTLE BY LITTLE THEY DESCENDED THE ALMOST PRECIPITOUS CLIFF.

A MISJUDGED WIFE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"PARTED."

THE deed of separation was signed, and Sir Reginald Erskine and his wife were alone for the last time.

They were both pale and heavy-eyed, and there were traces of lately shed tears on the girl's face, but she assumed a calm, cold manner, striving to hide the pain which was tearing the very life from her heart and soul.

Her husband saw the nervous movement of her hands from time to time, and the tremulous quiver of her mouth told him of her suffering; and, leaving the documents he was looking at, he went to her side, and, bending over her, took her hand in his.

"Adelaide," he said, in a gentler tone than he had used towards her for some time, "Adelaide, if you would only confess to me the meaning of your extraordinary conduct it is not too late, even now, to make things right between us. For the last time I ask your confidence; will you give it to me?"

"I cannot," she answered, in a choking voice; then recovering her composure with an effort she faced him defiantly. "I have nothing to tell you, Reginald; you have chosen your own line of action and I have agreed to all you wished, so I think you might be satisfied, and, as things now stand, the sooner we part the better. Further conversation can only bring further discussion. Considering the deed is already signed I should think it was a great deal too late to set anything right," and, rising, she crossed the room going towards the door.

But Sir Reginald Erskine still loved his young wife, and now that he had to say good-bye to her he more than half regretted the step he had taken, and would willingly have forgiven her,

even at the eleventh hour, if she would only explain a scene he had witnessed between herself and a young sailor just one month before.

He had been walking on the cliff at Golden-sands, sauntering along in a dreamy reverie, when he was suddenly aroused by hearing a cry from the beach below.

The voice seemed familiar to him, and lying down on the ground he leant over to try and discover who was in distress.

Great was his astonishment when he saw his own wife in a dead faint in the arms of a man who was an utter stranger to him, and his astonishment quickly turned to anger when he witnessed him kissing her tenderly again and again.

It was impossible for Sir Reginald to descend at that spot, the cliff being almost perpendicular.

In vain he tried to attract the sailor's attention, the wind apparently carried away the sound of his voice, for the man never even looked up at him; so, rising, he hurried along

to the steps which led down to the sea-shore, hoping to be in time to discover for himself who his wife's companion was. But although he walked very fast it was some time before he could reach the spot where the strange scene occurred of which he had been a witness, and when he at last arrived there both Adelaide and the sailor were gone!

Sir Reginald Erskine paused, fairly out of breath, and looked around him in bewilderment. He knew they could not have climbed the cliff, and also that there was no means of getting inland except by the steps he had recently descended, or by following the beach to the harbour beyond; and in the other direction, near to where he was standing, huge rocks rose, stretching from the cliffs far into the sea, and owing to the straightness of their sides and the slippery seaweed they were altogether impassable.

Yes, Adelaide was gone, but where?

As Sir Reginald thought the matter over he grew pale to the lips; he quite made up his mind that it was impossible for her to have escaped by land, and therefore came to the conclusion that she must have done so by sea.

But with whom?

Who was this fair-haired stranger who had taken his wife into his arms with such an air of possession?

Surely it was no old lover of hers returned too late, only to find her the wife of another!

Oh, if it should be so!

Adelaide had not seemed herself lately; perhaps that was the reason. She had doubtless found she had made a mistake, that her love had never been his, and as he thought of it a faintness came over him.

He sat down on the beach, removing his hat, and the cool sea-breeze soon restored his senses.

Seeing the necessity for immediate action, he roused himself from the lethargy into which he had fallen, and sprang to his feet. As he did so his eyes were attracted by a glittering object which lay half-hidden in the sand, and on picking it up he discovered it was the bracelet he had given his wife on their wedding-day, and she had promised to wear it through life for his sake.

It must have fallen off when she fainted, and in the hurry of her flight she had never missed it.

Perhaps she had mislaid it, but did not value it any longer, so left it for the first passer-by to find; and with very bitter feelings in his heart Sir Reginald placed it in his pocket and began to retrace his steps.

What was he to do!

He could not follow her, for he had no clue whatever as to where she had gone.

He did not like to employ anyone to assist him in his search for his wife, for that would help to publish Adelaide's disappearance, which he decided to keep a secret as long as possible.

Being a proud and reserved man he shrank from the gossip and scandal there would be if once the fact were made known, so he determined to travel about from place to place in search of her himself; and having thus far laid his plans he decided to start for Brest that very evening, thinking it a likely point at which she might have landed for necessary purchases.

But first of all he would go to the house that he had hired for the summer months and tell the servants that he and Lady Erskine intended taking a further change for a few weeks, and thus leave as if nothing had occurred.

In half-an-hour more he had entered his present home by aid of his latch-key; and mechanically hanging up his hat in the hall he entered the drawing-room in a dreamy mood, and his astonishment may be imagined when he saw Adelaide sitting at her work-table, apparently very busy with her embroidery.

She heard him enter the room and turned to greet him, but the expression of her husband's face startled her, and she shrank from his gaze.

"I hardly expected to find you here, Adelaide," he said, at length. "Have you not been out this afternoon?"

"Yes," she replied, taking up her work to hide

her confusion, and plying her needle diligently, she turned her back to him once more.

"Adelaide," he continued, sternly, "kindly put your work away and talk to me for awhile, for I have much to say to you."

"Have you?" she replied, indifferently. "Well, I can talk and work too! What have you to say to me?" and once more she bent her head over that most convenient embroidery.

But Reginald Erskine was not the man to be so easily put off, and just then he was fairly out of temper; so walking up to her he quietly disengaged her delicate fingers from the fancy work, and still holding her hands in his he sat down in front of her to watch her ever-varying expression.

"I want you to tell me all you have been doing," he began, "since I left home this morning?"

"Oh, nothing much," she answered. "Of course I had my daily work to do, and since luncheon I have been out a little while, that is all."

"And did you meet with any friend, when you were out?" he inquired, eagerly.

"Friend! no," she replied, and, looking up, their eyes met, and she flushed hotly.

"Are you quite sure?" he asked, in a hard voice. "Remember, Adelaide, you had better not deceive me, for if you do you will live to regret it."

"I really fail to understand you," she answered, with forced composure. "I tell you I met no friend this afternoon, and if you do not believe me the fault is not mine. I will tell you at once I decline to be catechised in this way, so the sooner we end this conversation the better," and she drew her hands away from him.

"Adelaide," he continued, sternly, "to prevent your prevaricating any further, I will tell you that I saw you on the beach this afternoon, I was on the cliff and I watched you for some time."

"Really?" she replied, with a mocking laugh. "It was a worthy occupation, Reginald, and one which I should have thought beneath the dignity of an active, too, grand gentleman like yourself. Why, how did you manage it? Considering the cliff almost overlaps the beach it would be rather difficult to look over; in fact it must have been impossible unless you lay down; and surely you would not condescend to that? If so I wish I had seen you. I am getting quite interested. Now, did you give a little boy assistance to hold your legs to prevent your falling over? What a pity it is that I cannot draw; the picture presented to my mind would make such a splendid caricature of you. But really, Reginald, I wish you would not look at me like that. I object to being stared at as if I were some extraordinary insect. If you saw me, my dear, surely that is enough, and you need question me no further, but I should like to know what you really did see!"

"That you know already, Adelaide, but since you wish me to tell you I will. When I looked over the cliff I beheld you, my wife, in the arms of a stranger! You had apparently fainted, and he, the scoundrel, was kissing you as if he had a perfect right to do so!"

"Ah, how very shocking!" replied Adelaide, with feigned distress. "What a disgraceful fellow he must have been! Why ever did you not slip over the cliff and fight it out with him! That is what you ought to have done, for, as you saw, I had fainted, and could not prevent him; now, could I?"

"Perhaps not," he replied coldly, "but you can help this flippant mood of yours, so be good enough to drop it. And pray may I ask who was this individual?"

"Who was he? How can I possibly tell you! All I can say is that I was walking along the beach when I suddenly fainted, and a young sailor, who happened to be just passing at the time, kindly supported me, and brought me round by bathing my face. I soon recovered, but I hesitated about telling you of it, because I thought it might make you anxious about me. Now, perhaps, you are satisfied."

"No, I am not, Adelaide. I have endeavoured to speak calmly with you, but you are aggra-

vating me almost beyond my power of endurance! I have asked you who that fellow was, and I have received no satisfactory answer. Now I insist upon your telling me, so do so at once!"

"Indeed!" she replied, indifferently. "Well, I regret I cannot satisfy your curiosity. It is quite impossible for me to ask every sailor I meet what his name is, in case you should question me on my return home. If you want to know you had better go and find him, and then you can ask him what you like. I have told you already he is no friend of mine, and that ought to be enough for you; if it is not I have nothing more to say."

"Very well," he replied, firmly. "You shall take your choice of two things—either you give me your confidence this evening, or else you and I must in future live our lives apart, and I shall at once see about a legal separation. I will give you two hours to decide, and remember I will not be played with any longer! Your very manner and language show me you are deceiving me, and as for your knowing nothing about that fellow, I tell you it is not true! In two hours I shall return, so choose your course before then," and without another word he left the room.

When Adelaide found herself alone she sank wearily upon the sofa.

"Oh! what can I do?" she cried, in agony.

"I dare not—dare not tell him, and yet how cruel it will be to part! Oh, Reginald, why cannot you trust me, for to lose you will well-nigh break my heart! But I must bear it, for, even to preserve my life's happiness, I will now divulge my secret! No, Raymond, my poor Raymond, I will keep my promise to you, and I thank Heaven I met you, even though the meeting has brought me into such misery! Oh! how I have been deceived, and how cruelly you have been wronged! And to think that I should have unknowingly married the very man who so misjudged you! Yet how greatly I love him! No, I must not tell Reginald our secret; it would not be safe; but, oh! the mockery of fate! that I should only have learnt the truth to-day!" and, lying back on the soft cushions, she buried her face in her hands, and wept bitterly.

It was thus Sir Reginald found her when the two hours had elapsed, and seeing her evident distress he went gently to her side.

"Adelaide," he said, "I have come for my answer. Will you give me your confidence or not?"

"I have nothing to tell you," she answered, wearily, "and now you can decide for yourself."

"Very well," he replied, "I will decide," and without another word he left the room.

Days passed slowly by, and there was an insupportable barrier between Adelaide and her husband; they were seldom together, and when they were, they hardly spoke.

Adelaide had missed her bracelet the first evening, and had many times hunted for it on the sea-shore in vain.

Fearing to tell Sir Reginald of her loss, she never mentioned it; and he, thinking her utterly indifferent as to whether she had it or not, had quietly looked it away in his private desk with great bitterness of spirit.

He had set a careful watch over his wife ever since the night of their misunderstanding, and at last, having satisfied himself that he had in no way misjudged the case, he started for London to make the necessary arrangements for their separation, and at last all was settled, the deed was signed.

For the first time for the past month Sir Reginald began to regret the step he had taken; perhaps, after all, there could be some explanation given of his wife's conduct, and even if she were in fault he felt he would rather forgive her than lose her altogether; so when Adelaide rose and crossed over to the door he felt a passionate longing to take her in his arms and clasp her to his heart once more.

Taking her by the hand he drew her gently towards him.

"My darling!" he said, tenderly, "I cannot bear to part with you now it has come to the actual good-bye. Let us try to understand each



other better. Surely you still love me just a little; you used to do so very much once?"

"Yes," she replied coldly, "and you used to profess to love me once, but it was some time ago I admit, and both you and I have had time to change since then."

"Speak for yourself, Adelaide. I have not changed in heart towards you, but you have sorely tried my faith in you, and it was while in anger that I suggested our separation. I think it was your indifferent manner that fairly maddened me, but I regret it now, my wife, and if you will only tell me your secret I will forgive you, even if you are in fault," and he stooped and kissed her.

The hot blood rose to her cheek and brow, and a wave of conflicting emotions swept over her face, but when she answered him she was even paler than before, and raising her steadfast eyes to his she said, calmly,—

"You are very good, but you have thought of being kind to me rather too late. I am sorry if I have caused you any pain, but when I am away I hope you will soon forget it all. You see we never were very suited to each other; spring and autumn can hardly be expected to run together, and I am too young for you, but it cannot be helped now."

"Am I so very old, Adelaide?" he asked, a smile brightening up his careworn face; "if so make me young again, dear; happiness will even make an old fellow of fifty feel quite a boy. What do you say, my wife? Will you take the trouble to cheer my life once more?"

"No, Reginald," she replied, wearily; "as I have said before, it is too late. I have made all my arrangements, and I could not draw back now even if I would, so good-bye!"

"If that is all you have to say to me," he answered, with hardening voice, "good-bye indeed!"

He passed out of the room, and in another second Adelaide heard the door slammed to and she knew that he was gone.

CHAPTER II.

"RAYMOND EGERTON'S STORY."

EVENING was closing in when Adelaide Erskine left her home.

Sir Reginald had not returned, so there was no one to watch or question her, which was almost a relief to the poor, weary girl, who wended her way down the dimly-lighted street with a strange sadness at her heart which she had never felt before, for each step took her further and further away from the man she loved.

Adelaide was usually a good walker, but to-night a great weariness overcame her, and she was obliged to lean against some railings for support.

Tears silently chased each other down her wan, pale cheeks, but approaching footsteps at last aroused her, and she hurried along to avoid attracting attention, and was soon lost to sight in the darkness which was rapidly coming on.

She turned into the footpath which led to the cliff, and feeling secure from recognition there slackened her speed.

"No one will see me now," she sighed. "Oh, Raymond!" she murmured, "how thankful I shall be when you are safe. There is indeed a sword of Damocles hanging over our heads. Heaven grant it may not fall!"

Just then she noticed a figure coming along the footpath, and in another moment Raymond Egerton was by her side.

"Darling, I have come to meet you," he said, softly, "for this is a dangerous walk in the daylight, and at night it is very difficult to keep to the path. One false step and you would be over the cliff!" and, taking her tenderly in his arms, he kissed her.

"How good of you to come!" she replied. "I feel safer now I am by your side. But is it not a terrible risk your coming out so far? Suppose anyone saw you?" and she trembled at the thought of it.

"Do not fear, dear," he said, in a confident

voice. "It is too dark for anyone to recognise me, and to-morrow I hope we shall be steaming away towards our new home. When once we arrive at Madrid we shall be safe enough, and I hope, Adie, we shall be happy too. But I cannot help thinking you will some day regret your old life, and the thought of it almost makes me wish we had never met—"

"Oh, Raymond; don't talk like that," she replied, earnestly. "I am more than thankful I met you, dear boy; and when once you are out of danger I shall be quite happy," and the darkness hid the tears which would gather in her eyes in spite of her efforts to restrain them.

They walked on in silence for some time, and at last came to an old seat, which showed them they were nearing their destination.

"Now, little one," he said, gently, "you will have to be very careful. Take my hand, and only move when I tell you," and he led her to the edge of the cliff.

Adelaide trembled as she saw the great jagged rocks beneath, surrounded by the foaming waves, which plashed up against them with the wash of the tide.

The moon had now risen, and lit up their hazardous path; but it only made them all the more anxious to obtain their hiding-place.

Remembering that it was for Raymond's sake the weary girl put her own feelings aside, and courageously followed her leader wherever he went.

Little by little they descended the almost precipitous cliff, and at last came to a tiny ledge.

Here was a small iron door, which made a creaking sound as Raymond Egerton pushed it open with his disengaged hand.

"I am thankful that is over," he said, as he led her down some steps, and along an underground passage. "I almost think the worst is passed," and in another minute they had entered a large airy room.

"Why, I declare you look quite comfortable!" cried Adelaide, as her eyes rested on a table with a well-spread supper upon it. "It makes me wish we could remain here instead of running into fresh perils by land and sea," and she smiled brightly up in her companion's face.

"I wish we could, too, dear," he replied, wistfully. "But there would not be much safety here for long, for this is the room in which they have all the public balls, and I fear, however much we disguised ourselves, some one would recognise us, and then what a scandal there would be!" and he laughed heartily as he thought of all "Mrs. Grundy" might say.

"I fear I have given 'Mrs. Grundy' plenty to talk about as it is," replied Adelaide, with a sad smile. "Only fancy, Ray! If anyone did see me going away with you! It would be all over the place that Lady Erskine had eloped with a fair young sailor. And how they would pity poor Sir Reginald, left in solitary grandeur at home, little thinking that the very bad young man was my own dear brother!" and clasping her hand in his she laughed too.

"I fear Sir Reginald will miss you very much, little woman. It was indeed noble of you to give up so much for my sake."

"It was his own fault in the first place," she replied, warmly. "He had no right to misjudge me in the way he did, so I have not much sympathy for him. But I hope some day, Ray, it will end happily for us all! I feel certain your innocence must be discovered sooner or later, and then I hope the villain, for whose evil deeds you are suffering, will be justly punished for his cowardly conduct. Sir Reginald will be the first to try and make reparation for the mistake he made in his judgment of the case."

"I do not blame him, Adie, and you must not do so either, for, if I had been the judge, I should certainly have condemned any fellow under similar circumstances. Everything pointed strongly to my guilt, and yet I had no more to do with it than you had," and his voice trembled with emotion.

"Ray, do you think you could tell me all about it, for I should so like to know the whole story? Until just a month ago I simply knew nothing, for you will remember I was in school in Germany at the time, and I did not hear a rumour

of it until the trial was over; and then I learnt from Mr. Herbert, our guardian, that you were to be imprisoned for ten years 'for most disgracefully betraying the trust placed in you, and that you had been found guilty of taking many thousands from the bank in which you were employed.' That was all I could hear from him, as he refused to enter into details; and, of course, being at school, I never saw a newspaper.

"I remained in Germany another year, and then our guardian sent for me to return to England, saying at the same time he had changed my name from Egerton to Harcourt, as he did not wish it known that I was related to you in any way."

"As Adelaide Harcourt I appeared in London, and shortly after that Mr. Herbert took me, with his wife, down to Brighton to spend the winter. It was there, at one of the public balls, that I met Reginald. He took a fancy to me, and not long after we became engaged."

"There is no doubt that Mr. Herbert knew that he had been the judge at your trial, for he warned me never to mention to Reginald that I ever had a brother, adding that it would not be pleasant for a man in Sir Reginald Erskine's position to marry the sister of a convict!"

"I told him I did not believe in your guilt, and I thought Reginald ought to know it, but Mr. Herbert silenced me upon the subject at once by saying that there was not the slightest doubt of your being guilty and justly condemned, and by mentioning your name I should be stirring up a fresh blaze, and so bring you into the light once more; and he ended by telling me, if I had any love for you, I had better be silent on the subject, and let the world forget—that that was the only thing to be done for you now."

"I foolishly obeyed him, and began my married life with a terrible secret in my heart. Each time I thought of it it seemed more and more impossible to let Sir Reginald know the truth, and the subject troubled me greatly, but it was not until I met you, Ray, that I really knew why Mr. Herbert had insisted upon my silence. He must have felt certain I never would have plighted my troth with a man who had sentenced my own brother to such a terrible fate, even if he had been willing to forget our past history."

"I believe our guardian acted for the best, but it has proved to me what a terrible mistake it is for a girl to begin life without perfect confidence with the man she marries. It would have been far better to have parted then than now."

"Poor little woman!" replied her brother, tenderly, "I fear you have given up too much for my sake. If you love your husband so greatly it is not too late to go back to him even now. I would rather you told him all than make you suffer. Go back in the morning, darling, and let me fight for myself. I had no idea you cared for him so much."

"Pray do not speak of my returning. I could not, and would not, do it. I do love him, dear, but even for that I will not sacrifice you. Sir Reginald is a stern judge, and with a keen sense of what he calls duty. If I told him where you were he would not consider that he was doing right to let you go free. No, dear, I will never return until he knows the truth, and then when he welcomes me he will welcome you also."

"My own brave girl," he answered, "how can I ever thank you?"

"I do not require thanks, you dear old boy, for, you see, I have pleased myself. And now do tell me all about it—I should so like to know!"

"You shall hear all I have to tell you, dear," he replied; "but, first of all, remove your hat and cloak, and make yourself as comfortable as you can under the circumstances."

And he led her to a low bench which stood beside the wall.

"There now, that is better. You are looking quite tired. And now for my miserable story."

"You will remember I entered Mr. Henley's bank when I was sixteen, and I got on very well indeed—so well, in fact, that by the time I was

one-and-twenty Mr. Henley had made me next to his own son in the firm. Of course he would not have done that unless he had been very fond of me; but it also showed that I knew my work, and I always tried to do my duty thoroughly.

"There is no doubt I was a great favourite with the old man. He made me as welcome to his house as if he had been my father, and having no parents of my own, I valued their kindness the more, and returned the affection showed me by Mr. Henley and his gentle wife with a fervour little sort of worship.

"Maurice Henley and I were like brothers, and he was quite willing I should share in his daily life; so, when I became of age, they proposed I should make their home my own, and I was only too glad to accept their generous offer.

"For two years everything went on as smoothly as possible. Then a cloud came between Maurice and myself. We both fell in love with the same girl, and from the moment he discovered I cared for her his affection for me seemed to turn to a cool hatred, and, although I cannot prove it, I believe it was his hand that ruined me."

"But surely, Ray, he would not have done such a thing!" said Adelaide, in an awed voice.

"I do not think there is the slightest doubt about it, little woman, for up to that time we used to exchange confidences in everything, and his manner altered directly I told him my secret.

"I wondered at his want of interest on the subject, as I did not know he cared for her too, for he was a much quieter nature than mine; and while I loved my darling passionately and madly, he cared for her in a cool, calculating sort of way, and determined to make her his wife.

"This I found out afterwards, and during my trial I heard of their engagement. I suppose they are married long ago."

"But were you ever engaged to her, Ray?" asked Adelaide, taking his hand tenderly in her own.

"No, dear, I was not actually engaged to her, but I loved her devotedly, and I believed myself beloved in return.

"I would not bind her to me until I was richer, for, as she was an heiress, I feared she might think I wanted her fortune instead of herself, so I determined to wait.

"Mr. Henley had several times talked of retiring and making Maurice and me partners, which would, of course, greatly have increased my income, turning my annual hundreds into thousands.

"No one seemed more pleased with the suggestion than Maurice; and life at that time seemed to hold a bright prospect for me, indeed, when suddenly a change came upon everyone, and one morning Mr. Henley sent for me, and met me with a very grave face. It was Tuesday in Whitnash-week, and the office had been shut up since the previous Saturday.

"I had been out all the day before until about six, and when Mr. Henley came in I noticed there was something the matter with him, but, seeing he was in a thoughtful mood, I refrained from questioning him.

"He remarked he was surprised to see me back so much earlier than I had stated I should return, and upon my replying I had not found my friends at home said no more.

"Maurice was away for the day too, and I did not see him that night.

"On the following day Mr. Henley ordered me into his study with a very abrupt message, and on my arriving there, instead of giving me a hearty hand-clasp, as was his usual wont, he simply bowed coldly in return to my morning salutation, and told me to take my seat opposite to him, which I did, feeling utterly bewildered, and I was conscious of my face flushing visibly as he sat and stared at me critically for some minutes without speaking.

"I fear, sir," I said at last, being able to bear the silence no longer, "that I have in some way unintentionally vexed you. If such be the case, believe me I am more than sorry; but, so far,

feel perfectly innocent of having done anything to annoy you. If you will tell me what it is I may be able to give you some explanation."

"Innocent, I fear, you cannot be," he replied, coldly; "and as for the explanation, I shall be glad if you can give me any."

"And he then told me he had accidentally gone into the office to fetch some paper on the day before, and was surprised by hearing a foot-step retreating stealthily down the passage, but before he could see who it was the person had gone, having passed out of the private door.

"He then returned to the office, and, to his astonishment, he found his own private safe had been tampered with, and the door left open. This fact he accounted for by his having disturbed the plunderer.

"He proceeded to examine the safe, and discovered that a quantity of his old family jewels had been taken out, also some thousands of pounds in gold and notes, which he had intended to invest as soon as the Whitnash holidays were over.

"He was just leaving the office when his foot struck against something, and on picking it up he discovered it was my bunch of keys, with my name attached to it!

"Worst of all, a false key to his safe had been fastened on to my ring, and in another part of the room he found a hat of mine, and a handkerchief marked with my name!

"Now, I admit that nothing could have looked more dead against me, but I had no power to prove my innocence, and the fact of my having returned home so much earlier than I was expected went against me too.

"I did my best to assure the poor old fellow I would not repay his kindness in such a heartless manner, and after a time my words softened him a little. He rose and came to my side, and, taking me by the hand, he said in a broken voice—

"My boy, I have always loved you as my own son, and it would almost break my heart to let the world know of your dishonour, so I will forgive you, even now, if you will only confess to me what made you do it, and return all to me before to-morrow morning. I will keep your secret. Not even my dear wife shall know of it. Oh, my boy! my boy! make a clean breast of it at once before it is too late!" and then he seemed quite overcome, and, sinking into a chair, he trembled in every limb.

"I continued to assure him I was innocent, but that seemed to harden him again, and he ended by saying it was a pity I should try to deceive him and thus add sin to sin, and that if I would not confess to him at once he would hand the matter over to the police, and let them do their worst.

"Thus our conversation closed, and I was requested by Mr. Henley not to leave his study until he sent for me. I remained there for some hours alone. When the door was opened again Mr. Henley entered, followed by a detective officer and Maurice.

"I was informed that my room was to be searched, and I was ordered to accompany them upstairs. This I did, and as I saw box after box turned out I began to feel brighter, and, looking at my poor old friend, I asked him if he were satisfied, for by then the contents of my last drawer were in the middle of the floor; but he did not reply to me, for he was interrupted by the officer of the law, who seemed to be trying to make himself as disagreeable as possible, and told me that there was a great deal more to be done before any one would feel satisfied, and that he had not yet finished searching my room.

"Indeed!" I replied. "I do not see where you can look any further, as I have no other box or trunk in my possession."

"Perhaps not," he returned, insolently; "but there are other places to be looked into besides boxes. Some people find a loose board affords a very good hiding-place, and I fancied I saw one just now. That is what I shall examine next," and so saying he pushed the bed on one side.

"I think you might spare yourself that trouble," I replied, almost laughing.

"But I stopped short before uttering the next

sentence for, as he removed the plank, to my horror I saw the whole of the gold, notes, and jewels which had been taken from Mr. Henley's safe the day before!

"I shall never forget that moment! I believe it was even more terrible to me than when I was convicted, for my trouble was so new then. I felt perfectly stunned and so paralysed that I could not speak a word.

"Maurice looked at me with a sort of triumphant hatred in his eyes, but he did not utter a word.

"The old man's face became perfectly livid with anger and sorrow combined; but it was the detective who was the first to speak, and he broke the spell which had fallen on us all.

"Yes, it was a pity I troubled, wasn't it?" he said, with a sneering look at me.

"I cannot understand it," I replied, when at last I had recovered power of speech. "All I know is I am perfectly innocent of the whole thing. Whoever placed those valuables there did so without my knowledge. I have nothing to do with it," and turning to Mr. Henley, I said, "Surely, sir, you can believe me when I tell you I am as bewildered as you can possibly be about the whole matter. Will you not take my word for it?" I pleaded. "I never deceived you in my life—why should I now?"

"No," he said, in a trembling voice, "I cannot believe you, everything points so clearly to your guilt. I fear there is no doubt about it;" and looking at the detective he told him to "do his duty," and I knew I was his prisoner.

"Maurice was the first to speak. Perhaps his conscience smote him when he saw what his work had brought about, for I felt certain it was his doing, although I could in no way prove it, and I did not feel inclined to repay the poor old fellow for all his past kindnesses to me by casting a slur on his son's name, especially as it would really have done my cause no good; so I said nothing, but as I was about to pass from the room I looked at him, and his eyes drooped beneath my gaze.

"He flushed hotly, and then, as if moved by a sudden impulse, he turned to his father, and laying a detaining hand upon his arm, he asked if I might be allowed to try and clear my name without taking the matter before the world, as it would ruin me for life; but Mr. Henley did not listen to him.

"I believe at that moment Maurice felt sorry for what he had done, for he came forward, and held out his hand, and said,—

"I hope you will come out of it all right."

"I took the hand he offered me, and told him if ever he knew whose doings it was he was to tell him I would forgive him, as I hope to be forgiven, and thus we parted, and we have not met since; but I shall never forget the expression of his face when I said good-bye to him.

"Mr. Henley let me pass out without a word, and I did not see the dear old lady, his wife, as she was away from home at the time, nursing her sister, who was ill.

"I felt thankful that it happened so, for I could not have borne it if she had believed me guilty, and had told me so by word or sign; so I left the old home where I had been so happy, and spent the next few weeks between my prison walls.

"Once only Mr. Henley visited me, and then it was to ask me if I had ready money enough to meet my solicitor's fees, for, if not, he would be happy to pay them for me, for 'old acquaintance sake,' adding, if I could prove my innocence he would be more than ready, and if not he would feel that he had done what he could for me.

"Of course I thanked him very heartily for his kind offer, which, I need hardly tell you, I was too proud to accept, and told him I fully intended to plead my own cause without assistance, and I could only hope I should clear myself before him and all the world; if not, of course I should have to bear the punishment for someone else's crime.

"He looked at me in astonishment, and tried to persuade me not to be what he called 'so foolish,' but finding me obdurate he left me, and did not come to see me again, so that was the last time I met him privately.

"Then came the trial.

"Everything went against me, and you know the result, little woman—I was condemned to ten years' penal servitude!"

He paused, and Adelaide placed her arm round him, and kissed him tenderly.

"My poor, poor brother," she said, "how terribly you must have suffered! Oh! I am indeed thankful you have at last made your escape, and that I have found you; but do tell me exactly how you managed it, for I have never yet been able to understand it clearly. I was always in such a hurry when I ran down to the beach to have a peep at you, for fear of being caught by Sir Reginald," and she nestled closer to him, and Raymond Egerton continued his narrative:—

"I will tell you all about it, dear," he replied, a little wearily, for the subject was very painful to him.

"Well, for three years and a half I had a dismal time, indeed; but at the end of that period things improved a little, on account of the arrival of a new warder.

"He was a tall man, with thick, curly black hair, a black beard, and heavy moustachios, and from the beginning he always had a kind word for me when he brought me in my miserable meals.

"After a week or two he very cautiously used to bring out of his pocket something to tempt my appetite, motioning to me at the same time not to speak my thanks aloud.

"I could not understand it at all, until one day he wrote me a letter, and left it with me to peruse at leisure. To my joy I found my warder was my intended deliverer in disguise, and he was only abiding his time; but in the meanwhile we had to be very careful not to attract attention, or it would be all over for me."

"But who was he?" inquired Adelaide, eagerly.

"Why, he was really the footman who had lived at Mr. Henley's house at the same time that I did. He always seemed very devoted to me, and on my being convicted he was so upset, and felt so certain of my innocence that he determined he would free me if he could, and had been working his plans all that time, and at last he succeeded. Poor fellow!"

"How noble of him!" said Adelaide, with emotion. "Do tell me how he managed it, dear!"

"It was through his father, who was a policeman, or rather a sergeant of the police, and very well thought of in his profession for many acts of gallantry which he had displayed while on duty, and they arranged it together.

"William entered the police force, and for three years worked well. By that time I was forgotten by the world in general, and they thought it would be safe to try to carry out their little plans.

"William pretended the constant exercise was too much for his strength, and his father pleaded for the situation for him as one of the warders in the Portland Gaol.

"Just at that time, as luck would have it, the fellow who waited on me died, and William was taken on through his father's interest, though he was generally liked for his own sake, too.

"He appeared to make so strict a warder that he was soon thought well of by the governor.

"Week by week we waited, until nearly six months had passed, and I was beginning to feel impatient.

"During that time William's poor old father died, leaving him his savings, which amounted to four hundred pounds. This he did not invest; but he has kept it in his possession ever since, and now spends it loyally in providing for my every want.

"It is more than good of him; but he shall not go unrewarded by-and-by. Well, before he returned to Portland after his father's funeral he went to some obscure part of London and bought two disguises—one for himself and for me.

"By-the-bye, Adie, you have never told me how you like my fair hair!"

"I have, dear," she replied, smiling up at him.

"I really think it is splendid! I said so the other day."

"Did you, little woman? Then I forgot; but it does alter me wonderfully, don't you think so?" he asked, laughing at the thought of his changed appearance.

"It is many years since I last saw you, darling," she replied; "but I certainly should not have recognised you if you had not spoken to me."

"That is fortunate, under the circumstances!" he answered, sadly, "and we will hope no one else will notice me either."

"Well, to continue my story. William arranged everything in the most clever manner, and at last all was ready, and he wrote and told me his plans.

"During the six months at Portland he had made friends with a poor old fisherman who lived at Weymouth, and promised to give him fifty pounds down if he would help him and keep silence, which he was only too glad to do, looking at fifty pounds as a mine of wealth in comparison with the abject poverty of his surroundings.

"He had no wife or children, so there was no one who would be likely to question him, and it was settled that he was to come as close as he could with his old fishing-smack to the prison walls without being near enough to attract attention, and we were to swim out to join him.

"At length the night arrived, and when William came for the last round he gave me the necessary tools for unfastening the bars of my small window, a rope ladder, and some footpads, also his watch, and he told me at one o'clock precisely I was to let myself down. I shall never forget that night.

"How I managed to do everything in the dark I do not know.

"The moon helped me sometimes by peering out from behind the masses of dark clouds.

"At last I was ready, having just made room enough to get through, and I waited anxiously until the clock should strike one.

"Fortunately for us it was streaming with rain, and the night watch were glad to seek shelter instead of patrolling, as they usually did.

"I will remember how every sound startled me, and made me tremble for fear we might yet be discovered; but the time came, and slowly, very slowly, I began to descend the rope ladder, and at length I was on terra firma. William was there waiting for me.

"He had volunteered to take the watch on my side of the prison that night owing to the illness of the man whose duty it was, and that was really what made him decide on our making our escape when we did, so we were in less danger of being discovered.

"We went stealthily across the prison yard, but the governor's favourite mastiff heard us, and rushed out of his kennel, barking loudly.

"In vain we tried to quiet him, and to our dismay we saw lights appear in the building.

"Good heavens, we shall be caught yet!" whispered William in an awed tone, and in another second we had leapt into the sea. "Swim for your life!" he cried; "it is our only chance!"

"The alarm bell had been rung violently, and we could hear the barking of the excited dog in the distance.

"Fortunately the moon had once more disappeared behind the heavy clouds, and the night was as black as ink.

"We gave a low whistle, and our good old friend answered back, so we knew we were nearing him, and slackened our speed.

"You can imagine how very thankful we were when we had scrambled into the boat, for I was well-nigh exhausted, not being accustomed to such violent exercise.

"The sails were hoisted, and by the aid of muffled oars way was made as quickly as possible, and not a word was spoken for some time.

"At length we began to feel secure, and William suggested we should change what things we could as quickly as possible, while it was still dark, in case of anyone noticing us.

"He had given our disguises into the charge of our old fisherman, and he now handed them to us with a hearty laugh.

"I'm darned if I don't think we done 'em

this time," he remarked, "and when you've got them tugs on, I don't think there's much fear of any of 'em knowing yer."

"We went on somewhat silently, and when morning dawned we completed our toilet. William took off the black wig, beard, and moustachios that he had worn ever since he entered the police force, and replaced them by a very grizzly grey set, and finished himself off as a Methodist parson.

"I can tell you his get-up was simply perfect. He then helped me into this attire, and rolling up his old clothes with mine—wigs, boots, stockings, everything that we had had on before—plunged them into the sea, and then we all drank each other's health, and began to feel as jolly as sandboys.

"At last we came in sight of the cliffs of this place, so we hauled down our sails for fear of being taken too suddenly against the rocks, and using our muffled oars once more we soon arrived at our landing-place, where we parted with our good old friend, who went away triumphantly with fifty pounds in his pocket, for William had brought all his money with him, and had taken the precaution before he left Portland to tie round his neck in a thick leather purse, which he rolled up in an oilskin bag so that the water should not harm it.

"There was no one to be seen, and for a few minutes we stood enjoying our freedom, and admiring the glory of the rising sun over the water.

"Then William led the way, and taking our basket, well filled with provisions, we gradually climbed up the cliff until we came to the front door.

"At first we found some difficulty in opening it; however it at last yielded to our force, and we entered.

"After carefully closing it behind us, we made our way down the passage which we have passed through just now, and found ourselves where we are at the present time."

"How wonderful!" exclaimed Adelaide, smiling through her tears of thankfulness at her brother's deliverance. "But how did you know of this hiding place, dear? I have never heard of it before."

"Neither had I," he replied; "but William had been a waiter before he went to live at the Henleys, and he had often been hired to attend at the balls held here, and, like a young fellow would be sure to do, had explored all the little secret outlets. He tells me there are stories of this place having belonged to smugglers at one time, and that little door is the one by which they used to enter. It must have been a capital place for them, the entrance is so well hidden by the projecting rocks, and the commencement of the way up by masses of seaweed that no one would notice it if they did not know it was there."

"What a merciful thing he knew of it!" replied Adelaide, with feeling. "We have indeed much to thank him for; I only fear we shall never be able to repay him. I suppose he has made all the arrangements for our voyage, and will give us full instructions!"

"Yes, of course, dear. I have left everything to him, as I have hardly been out since I have been here, and William has, for he could laugh at the sharpest detective living; but he seldom goes out until dusk, when he gets all the necessary things. He always buys the daily papers, and you can't think what fun we have had reading the accounts of the 'Extraordinary disappearance of a warder and a convict,' but they have not been able to start on the right track yet, and I hope they never will. Now, old lady, come and have some supper, for we must be off soon. It was lucky we found this old table here, wasn't it? We have much to be thankful for I assure you," and taking Adelaide across the room, he placed before her a nice wing of chicken and some claret.

"My dear old Ray, I cannot eat anything, so do not ask me, there's a pet," and once more she took his hand affectionately.

"Nonsense, dear; you really must, for my sake," and seating himself beside his sister, Raymond Egerton began his supper in right earnest.

"I am awfully hungry," he said, laughing; "do go on, or I shall feel quite uncomfortable," and Adelaide, seeing it would please her brother, tried to enjoy the evening repast as much as he did.

CHAPTER III.

GOOD BYE TO OLD ENGLAND.

AN hour later and Adelaide was startled by an unusual sound, and asked her brother what it meant, but he soon reassured her, telling her that if she heard anything it must be William returning, and that he very often came in from the large entrance because it was a nearer way back from the town.

"Oh, yes, I remember," she replied, laughing; "that is where you let me out the first afternoon I saw you. Do you know? It is quite close to where we were living then, and you cannot think how thankful I was to get home before Reginald came in, and he did look so astonished when he saw me!" and she laughed again at the remembrance of his expression of face.

At that moment the door opened, and an apparently aged man with bent figure, entered the room, looking every inch a highly respectable old Methodist, his slouched felt hat, pulled down over his forehead, prevented the smooth brow, so free from wrinkles, from being seen.

"Is he not splendid?" said Raymond, looking at Adelaide.

"He is, indeed!" replied she, eagerly, "although I have no idea what William is really like."

"Oh, no, of course; I forgot you did not know him; but now let me introduce you to my noble deliverer," and taking Adelaide across the room he introduced her to the man who had proved so true a friend to him.

Adelaide shook hands with him cordially, and in a few well chosen words expressed her heartfelt gratitude for his great kindness to her brother; but William would receive no thanks at all, saying he was only too glad to be able to serve him, and then they all sat down to hear what arrangements he had made.

Adelaide Eckstine had a sweet winning way with her, and she very soon made William feel entirely at his ease; the first shyness having passed off he was apparently quite at home in her society.

He had asked Adelaide in the beginning of their conversation if she would mind his accompanying them to Madrid, and she had so warmly told him she would not lose sight of him for anything, and made him see how necessary he was to them both, that he at once felt very happy.

It was arranged they should leave their present abode without delay, and get into a carriage he had ordered to be ready for them in an hour's time at the railway station, then drive down to the port, about twenty miles from Goldensands, where an outward-bound steamer was being laden.

It was really not a passenger ship, but the captain had been persuaded to oblige the Methodists, who seemed anxious to take his son and invalid daughter for a sea voyage as soon as possible; and as, he had said, he had some very great friends over at Madrid, he had made up his mind to take them there.

Seeing he did not seem to mind paying well, the captain consented, and all the arrangements were made.

"You don't mean to say we are supposed to be your son and daughter!" laughed Raymond; "that is good."

"I hope you do not mind," replied William, growing very red. "I said that because I thought it would go down better with the captain. It looks so natural for me to be anxious to get away in a hurry, as the doctor insists on a sea voyage immediately for my invalid girl. You don't object, do you?" he questioned, eagerly, looking at Adelaide.

"Not in the least, I assure you," she replied, quietly; "but I fear I do not look very delicate, do I, Ray?"

"I can't say you look very well, dear. If you lean no end on my arm, and pretend you can't stand without assistance and all that sort of thing, I am sure it will be all right. But I say, William, what name have you given us? Have you put us down as Smith, Jones or Robinson?"

"Well," he replied, "I fear Lady Eckstine will have to forget her position for a time, but I have not given her quite such a bad exchange as either of the names you have suggested. I have called myself the Rev. Albert L'Estrange. Will that do?"

"Capital!" they both exclaimed at once.

"I am glad you think so," he replied, smiling; "and now, Lady Eckstine, I must ask to be allowed the privilege of calling you by your Christian name, for as my daughter, you see, I shall have to be on rather familiar terms."

"Certainly," said Adelaide, quickly, "do and say whatever you think best, William. Both my brother and I can trust you fully, so use your own judgment in all things."

"Thank you," replied the man, quietly. "I only hope all may end well. And now I shall just go and have a look round from my perch; if there is no one about I shall return for you immediately," and he left the brother and sister once more alone.

"Raymond," said Adelaide, when William was out of ear-shot, "I will hand you over my purse, and if he will let you, pay William back all you owe him, but whether he will accept it or not, remember he is our guest in future. He must never leave us after the noble way he has served you. He is worthy of your truest friendship and esteem."

"You are right there, little woman; he is, indeed, a splendid fellow, and a well-read man into the bargain. His father had him educated far above his station in life, hoping to procure for him some good appointment. One had been almost promised him by some swell whose life he saved a few years ago; but before it was settled Mr. Marcus died, so his interest was lost, and William preferred going out to service instead of idling at home on the pretence of looking out for something grander to do."

"I respect him for it," replied Adelaide, warmly.

"So do I, dear; but now tell me how much you have given me in this purse, it feels very full!"

"Well, dearest, I thought I had better bring all I had, so I drew out the two thousand I had in consoles, feeling sure we should not be able to get on without it."

"It was very thoughtful of you, dear girl," he replied, putting his arm round her slender waist, and kissing her affectionately, "but what did our guardian say as your trustee?"

"Well, he made every difficulty he could, but I think he was glad to consent in the end, for his righteous soul was dreadfully troubled at my shocking conduct, as he called it, so he gave way to me just to be rid of me. I would have had out my share of poor mother's money too if he would have allowed me, but that he said was quite impossible, so I had to give it up, and I told him I would write to him for the interest whenever I wanted it. This two thousand is what I have saved before and since my marriage. I had given it into his hands to invest for me; and now, darling, I give it to you to do just what you like with it."

"Thank you, dear; I only wish I could get at my own money. It seems hard to have to be dependent at my time of life."

"Oh! Ray, don't say that," replied Adelaide, gently, "it is more than a pleasure to me to help you a little now, and if you will only be able to find some employment in Spain we shall be quite comfortable."

"I hope so," he replied, wearily, and then they became silent, each one too interested in their own thoughts for outspoken words.

Soon afterwards, William Harvey now known as Mr. L'Estrange, returned to them, and told them it was time to go. They arose at once to follow him, but first of all they cleared away and tied everything they did not want with them up

in the table-cloth, which they dropped over the cliff as soon as they were outside.

There was not a soul about save an occasional policeman, who, seeing their quiet appearance, passed them by without a thought.

At length they arrived at the railway station, just after the last train had come down from London, and they went at once to the carriage which was waiting for them, got in, and drove off at a brisk rate. It was broad daylight before they reached the quay, and the steamer looked as if she were impatient to start.

Mr. L'Estrange, seeing the captain walking on the pier, went forward to meet him, and brought him up to be introduced to his so-called son and daughter.

It was a trying moment for them all, but they assumed a nonchalant manner, and the meeting passed off well.

The captain offered his arm to Adelaide, and said he would take her down to the steamer himself, and show her her cabin.

Adelaide was veritably trembling from head to foot with nervousness, which helped her in taking the rôle of an invalid; and Captain Dalton, thinking she was suffering from extreme weakness, took her kindly by the other hand as well, and told her to lean on him as much as possible.

Raymond, walking behind, pretended to give a helping hand to the old man, who moved along with a feeble gait.

"Do you think the luggage has arrived?" asked Adelaide, when they once more found themselves alone.

"Oh, yes, I asked the captain just now, and he says it is all right, and here is your bag, my dear," continued Mr. L'Estrange in fatherly tone, as a fine specimen of the "Jack Tar" brought a large portmanteau into the cabin with a little hand-bag as well, who, having received a generous tip for his trouble, went off very contented.

"Is that for me?" said Adelaide. "It is indeed good of you to have taken so much pains to make everything so comfortable. I can never thank you enough."

"Please do not think of it at all. I only hope you will find everything you need. I don't know the contents of the portmanteau, but I went to a draper's and told the managers of the establishment I wanted a complete outfit for my daughter, who was going abroad, and was too ill to see about the things herself. She promised to pack everything you would require. There are only just the things you will need on the voyage; the remainder of your things are put down in the hold with the rest of the luggage; and now, Raymond, if you will come with me we will leave your sister to make herself as comfortable as she can, and if you could try to sleep for a little while I am sure it would do you good," continued Albert L'Estrange to Adelaide. "But Ray shall come back to you soon, and see how you are getting on," and with a parting smile they left her.

When the door closed the weary girl sank upon her knees, and breathed a prayer of thankfulness that they had been brought so far in safety on their journey, praying earnestly that all might continue to be well with them, and that some day her brother's innocence would be proved, and she should be restored to her husband whom she loved so dearly. Then she arose, feeling calmer and stronger than she had felt before, and began to open her portmanteau to see what it contained.

She was charmed to find everything she could possibly require, and on opening the small bag she discovered it was a pretty dressing-case, fitted up completely with all the necessary and unnecessary articles of a lady's toilet.

She had scarcely finished looking at her treasures when Raymond returned.

"Oh, Ray!" she cried, "is this your doing?"

"No, darling, I had nothing to do with it. I only told our beloved pater that you would want everything, and he said he would get it. If he has pleased you, old girl, I am more than glad, too."

"Yes, I am very pleased," Adelaide replied, "and of course you will settle with William as soon as you can, dear."

"I have done so already as far as your clothes are concerned, but at present I cannot find out

what he paid for our passage, and he seemed so offended when I pressed him to tell me that I don't like to say much about it."

"It is very unfortunate," she returned, gravely, "but we must try and make it up to him some other way."

"Yes, we will try," he answered wearily; "but as we must seek employment when we get to Madrid I fear the prospect does not hold out much chance of my ever being able to repay him."

"Well, do not fret, dear old boy. Be thankful that you have found so good a friend, and remember, 'The grateful mind in owing, owes not, but still pays,' and I feel sure William would rather have your gratitude than your money at present, and by-and-by you will be able to give him both."

"You always were more hopeful about things than I was, Adie, so I will say no more, and can only trust you will prove a true prophet."

Just at that time a terrible lurching was felt, a good deal of settling was heard, and then all seemed to go smoothly.

Albert L'Estrange came to announce that they had started, and Raymond could only clasp his sister's hand in his, and they both involuntarily murmured, "Thank Heaven!"

(To be continued.)

A WIND OF FATE.

—II—

WHEN mamma and I decided to pass the summer at Greylock, a quiet little seaport on the East coast, of course Fred Lingard made arrangements to spend his holidays there also. For Fred and I were engaged—at least, we were as much engaged as I would consent to be. I said we were "half engaged," which always made mamma very indignant.

"Nobody ever heard of such a thing," was her displeased answer to all such statements on my part.

But I didn't care if it was unheard of. When people were really engaged they began to think about getting married, which I never did. I was in no hurry to marry Fred or anybody else—I liked my freedom too well.

Fred himself took our engagement seriously enough, at least, as seriously as it was in his nature to take anything, for he was about as harum-scarum as I, and mamma could tell you how bad that was, if you were to ask her.

I think, between us, we were somewhat of a trial to dignified, sober, proper mamma—full of anxiety as to the future which never troubled me.

Of the two she minded Fred less. For one thing, he was a man, and many things were allowable for him that I could not do, as mamma often reminded me. Besides, she forgave Fred a good deal because of his devotion to me, for he really was devoted—at least, as much as I would allow him to be. Too much attention from one person, however agreeable, always bored me.

So when Fred, on being told of our plans, announced his intention of coming to Greylock in August, when his holiday began, I frowned, and said rather pettishly—

"Why don't you go somewhere else, where you can see new people? You must be tired of the sight of me. And Greylock is a very stupid place, besides."

Whereas mamma looked very much shocked; but Fred only laughed.

"Perhaps you are tired of the sight of me?" he suggested, amiably. "Why do you go there if it is stupid?"

"Oh—because I am tired of the rush and excitement of fashionable summer-resorts, which you never seem to be. I want to go where it is quiet and solitary, where I shall meet nobody I know."

"How can you be sure that I am not tired too? I need rest as well as you," he continued, quite unmuffled. "Of course, if you don't want

me to go, I won't," he concluded, looking so nearly hurt that I relented and accorded him my gracious permission.

Mamma and I left town early in June. We had engaged rooms with a widow "who had seen better days." We had been recommended to her by an acquaintance, to whom she was a distant relation. Mrs. McClure lived in a little cottage down by the sea, taking one or two lodgers during the summer in order to eke out her scanty income. Unexceptionable references being one of her requirements, we were very glad that she consented to accommodate us.

Greylock owned one small hotel and a few boarding-houses; but it was, as I have said, very quiet. The sea-air and the rest, however, were just what I needed, and they soon brought back the colour and flesh of which the winter's dissipation had deprived me.

It was not a very large place, but it boasted a small aristocracy, of which the ministers and the doctor were the chief lights. Besides the floating population in summer, the regular inhabitants were mostly the fishermen and their families.

One day, in the course of some neighbourhood gossip with my landlady, I happened to mention Dr. Risley's name, and I remarked that I had never met him. "I have had the pleasure of seeing your minister, and he is a dear old man," I added.

"The doctor's not old, miss—not much more than thirty," said Mrs. McClure, picking up the sock she was knitting, and clicking her needles as she talked. "But he's a character for you," she continued. "His sister ain't very young; she lives with him—she is Miss Grace. That big old house on the hill is thirs. He has money, they say; but he seems to have settled down here for good. He tends all the poor folks round for nothing, and it's to be said they all adore him."

"Who is 'Miss Grace'?" I asked, a question now and then being all that was necessary to stimulate the old lady's unceasing flow of garrulity.

"She's his ward," was the prompt reply; "and a pretty girl she is, too. He thinks a sight of her, and she of him. I suppose they'll get married, after awhile."

This seeming to be the natural conclusion of the matter, I was not inclined to doubt it; and presently the subject was dropped.

Not long after this I walked down to one of the fishermen's cottages, where a little girl lived who was ill. I had become interested in her, and was anxious to know how she was. I knocked at the door, and it was opened by a ruddy-looking, rather grave-faced man of thirty or thereabout. I felt sure he was the doctor, and so he proved to be.

In the absence of her mother, the little invalid introduced us, and we talked quite unconstrainedly. There was a naive simplicity about the doctor that delighted me—it was so novel. He never looked at me to see whether I was handsome, and there was no flattery, either conscious or unconscious, in his manner. Accustomed as I am to it in society, its absence was rather refreshing than otherwise to me.

We met several times after this, in the same way, and made acquaintance with each other rapidly. We were both of us much interested in little Bessie, and this helped to break the ice very quickly.

One day, on my return from a long walk, mamma met me with the announcement that there had been visitors.

"Miss Risley, the doctor's sister, and his ward, Miss Kimball, have just gone."

I felt somewhat disappointed, as I was slightly curious to see the doctor's family—particularly the younger lady, in whom he was supposed to be interested.

"Miss Risley is plain, and not particularly attractive," continued mamma; "but Miss Kimball is very pretty and agreeable. They were sorry that you were not at home; but I promised them that we would return their visit soon."

Accordingly, in the course of the week, we called at the big house on the hill. It was a queer, rambling, old-fashioned dwelling. Somehow it reminded me of the doctor himself.

The ladies answered to mamma's description; but the elder was sufficiently like her brother to impress me pleasantly. Miss Kimball was about eighteen; a graceful blonde, with delightfully ingenuous ways. I was pleased with her at once.

After we had talked for a few minutes, the door opened and the doctor appeared, looking rather abstracted; but I decided that his manners were charming—the height of simplicity.

"What an oddity!" remarked mamma to me afterwards. But he impressed me, as usual, as an agreeable one.

Presently he asked me whether I would like to see his collection.

Now, I have but one hobby—natural history—so I accepted the doctor's proposition with alacrity. Mamma declined going, so we two—Grace, as I learned later to call her, and I—went into the back parlour.

When I saw the results of the doctor's investigations I concluded that I had discovered the reason for his burying himself and his unusual talents in this quiet place. He wanted time for research.

"Look at all these horrid things he wastes his leisure over," said Miss Kimball, smiling mischievously at her guardian, bending lovingly over his treasures.

He did not seem at all disturbed by her rally. That he was both fond and proud of his ward was very evident. There certainly seemed to be a good understanding between them.

Our acquaintance with the Risleys ripened rapidly into friendship. They were almost the only persons in Greylock for whom I cared.

The summer boarders were too much like inferior imitations of the people I had left behind in town, and the regular inhabitants were not of the intellectual order—generally speaking, at least.

Miss Risley improved so much on acquaintance that mamma and she formed quite an intimacy. I had become very fond of Grace, and as for the doctor, he and I were fast friends.

He interested me because he was so unlike the society men with whom I was acquainted. He was what neither Fred Lingard nor any of them was—thoroughly in earnest.

We met very often in the course of my visits to Bessie Lane, who was still an invalid. We even reached the stage of friendship when I ventured to rally him on being willing to remain in obscurity; but I did not make much impression.

It was August now, and Fred would soon arrive, whereas mamma was greatly delighted—more so than I, I'm afraid. I did not feel as enthusiastic, perhaps, as I might have, or as mamma thought I should.

Walking along the cliffs I met the doctor returning from some visit. It was the day I had just received Fred's letter announcing his coming. We began talking, and I remarked, carelessly—

"We expect a friend here shortly. I don't know whether you have heard me speak of him—Mr. Lingard."

"No," replied the doctor, giving me one of his calm, scrutinising glances, which seemed to read my very soul.

I felt as if it would be impossible to hide anything from him, even if one tried. I felt sure that he divined at once how matters stood with Fred and me, and of course I blushed a little, just because I did not wish to. He began to talk of something else, however, and in five minutes I had forgotten all about the matter.

When the doctor talked, one forgot everything except what he was saying—at least, if one had sense enough to appreciate him.

Towards nightfall the next day a terrible storm broke.

We learned that there was a ship tossing in the tempest, just outside the harbour. Very much excited by the idea, I insisted on being a witness of the sight.

Mamma yielded a reluctant consent, and, well wrapped up in waterproof cloak and shoes, I accompanied Jennie, the stout serving-maid, to the cliffs, where a thrilling scene presented itself.

The waves rose high, and the wind drove the ship wildly about.

The lighthouse-keeper and all the men were there, getting out the boats. Foremost among them, leading and invigorating, was the doctor's tall figure. I now saw him in a new light—not a student or naturalist, but a leader of men: bold, fearless, and athletic.

Catching sight of me, he gave me a reassuring glance, even a smile, and, coming towards me, said—

"I do not think the danger is very great."

"Shall you venture out?" I asked, anxiously. The sea looked awful to my unaccustomed eyes.

"I do not think there will be any need," he answered. "These men are more skilful with the oars than I. All they need is a head to direct them—there are hands enough."

The doctor was right. Everybody on board the ship was saved, and even the vessel itself was found next morning to be less damaged than had been feared. But I had gained a new respect for my friend.

The following day dawned clear and beautiful. Fred was expected to arrive, so mamma, Grace, and I walked down to the little station to meet him.

Grace looked unusually pretty, and I told her so. She blushed very charmingly. I sang praises of the doctor's conduct the night before, and that delighted her, I could see.

Just as we reached the station the train rushed rapidly in, stopping long enough to give a well-known figure time to alight; and, in a moment, Fred was holding mamma and me each by the hand, giving Grace a sidelong glance.

Disengaging my hand, I introduced them, and we chatted gaily as we walked towards home.

Fred was in the best of spirits, but he looked very young and boyish to me.

His arrival made the "partie-carrée" complete, so it did not disturb our intimacy. Fred is a sensible youth on the whole, and he liked the doctor at once. We had a great deal of fun and enjoyment in the days that followed. The doctor seemed to have dropped his grave student's mantle and to have grown quite boyish. I liked Grace better, the more I understood the sweetness of her disposition.

August melted almost imperceptibly into September. Soon it would be time to return home. Fred must go back, he said, by the end of September; so we about decided that we would accompany him.

One morning, towards the close of our last week, I awakened with a violent headache.

"I was going to propose a row," said Fred, at the breakfast-table.

"You will have to dispense with my society, then," I answered; "but the rest of you can go."

At first he protested, and offered his services to me; but I declined them.

"I am going to my own room," I said—I am afraid, a little irritably—"to lie down." And I went.

I fell asleep, and about two hours later awoke, feeling somewhat better. I fancied that the fresh air would do me good; so, arraying myself in a thick jacket, for the weather was cool, I started for a walk.

I sauntered towards the boat-landing, wondering whether the others had gone rowing. If so, I should probably meet them on their return. A fresh breeze blew so strongly that it almost cured my headache. I buttoned my jacket up close and walked briskly on.

Suddenly my name was spoken in a cheerful tone—

"Miss Grafton!"

Looking up I saw the doctor.

"Good morning," I said. Then, "Have you seen anything of the others?"

"No. I have been busy all the morning," was the reply. "I have been rather idle of late," he continued, smiling.

(Continued on page 377.)

MY SWEETHEART.

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CHAPTER I.

"PAULA, PAULA, darling! Don't you know the sun is an hour high? The clock has just struck six. You will be late at the shop, dear, and you know they are only waiting for a good excuse to turn us both off."

As Mildred Garstin uttered these words she came hurriedly across the room and knelt down by a couch upon which her pretty young sister lay sleeping, and laid her hand lovingly on the curly golden head half buried in the white, ruffled pillow.

The girl's blue eyes flared open wide.

"Can it really be six o'clock, Mille!" she cried, breathlessly, as she pushed the fluffy, clustering curls back from her lovely dimpled face. "Oh, it almost seems as though I could give the whole world, if I had it, to sleep just five minutes longer! I thought it was Sunday at first, and I was so glad—so glad."

Mildred turned away that Paula might not see the tears that were gathering in her eyes.

"Oh, wouldn't it be grand to be rich, Mille, dear," Paula sighed, as she proceeded to hastily don her blue-and-white plaid gingham dress, and adjust the plain but dainty white ruffles at the throat and wrists. "Then we wouldn't have to get up every morning at six—rain or shine—take ten minutes to dress, ten to eat our scanty breakfast, and forty minutes to walk to the shop, in order to reach there at seven, and with never a thought of taking a tram, because it would cost a penny. Why, when I look up from my work and glance out of the window, and see young girls riding by in their carriages, dressed in silks and velvets, who are not half so good-looking as I—oh, I just feel like rebelling against fate!"

Mildred Garstin looked at her aghast. Paula, the fair young sister whom she adored, was as beautiful as a poet's dream, and it had always been the one grave dread of Mildred's life lest the girl should find it out, and that it would turn her head.

The light shawl she was about to wrap about herself fell from the nerveless fingers.

"What put such a thought in your brain that you were better-looking than other young girls?" she asked slowly, anxiously.

"Our new foreman told me so only yesterday," returned Paula, complacently, bursting into a merry, rollicking laugh as she observed the look of horror on Mildred's face.

"He should never have said that to you," Mildred said, huskily. "It is cruel to put such thoughts into the head of a girl who must tell for her bread. You must forget them, Paula."

The girl did not dare to tell Mildred that he had added that "she was far too pretty to work for her living."

"Come, dear," said Mildred, "we must kiss mother good-bye, and be off. We haven't a moment to spare."

With their arms about each other, they entered an inner room, both uttering in the same breath, "Good-morning, mamma dear."

A pale faced, gentle old lady in a widow's cap, who was propped up in an invalid's chair by the window, turned a sad, wistful face to them.

"Good-morning, Mildred; good-morning, Paula," she responded with a brave attempt at cheerfulness.

She smiled tenderly to Mildred, but it could not but be noticed that her eyes dwelt longer and more lovingly on her younger, prettier, and better-loved daughter—her darling Paula.

"I left a beautiful white rose on the table for you, mamma dear," said Paula.

"And I left your oatmeal nicely covered up for you, mother," added the more practical Mildred.

"I shall do very well, dears," said Mrs. Garstin.

"I hope you are feeling better to-day, mother," said Mildred. "You look so much better; there is actually a flush on your face and a brightness in your eyes such as I haven't seen there for years, and I am so rejoiced!"

"You are a good daughter, Mildred," murmured Mrs. Garstin.

She would not dampen the girl's spirits by telling her that it was an unnatural flush on her face and brightness in her eyes, and that she had never felt so ill as at that moment.

Paula was already half down the stairway, and was calling to her sister, but Mrs. Garstin laid a detaining hand on the girl's arm.

"Mildred," she whispered, "promise me this: if anything should—should happen to me you will always watch carefully over your sister Paula, she is so beautiful and so—so wilful."

"Oh, mamma," cried Mildred, flinging herself on her knees at her mother's feet, and bursting into tears, "you frighten me!"

"I did not mean to," murmured Mrs. Garstin. "But, oh, Mildred, I want you to promise what I ask!"

"You know that I will always look after Paula, mamma, dear," she answered, sobbingly, "for I love her better than my life! I willingly give you the promise, but to hear you asking it sounds as though you thought that you wouldn't be here long for us to—to look after her yourself."

If the girl's head had not been bowed in her hands she would have seen the deathly pallor that crept over her mother's face.

"I hope to be with you both many a year yet," returned Mrs. Garstin, huskily. "Still we never can tell."

Paula's voice calling impatiently to Mildred from the hall below reminded them how swiftly time was flying.

Mildred sprang to her feet, and kissing her mother a fond good-bye, hastily joined her sister.

Mrs. Garstin watched them from the window until they had both disappeared from her sight.

They were both dressed with extreme plainness—almost to shabbiness—but two prettier girls could hardly be found in all London.

Mildred was twenty, and Paula was seventeen. Mildred had a dark olive face lighted up by a pair of large, mournful eyes; brown wavy hair, which she usually wore brushed plainly back. The whole beauty of her face lay in the sweet smile which was generally on her lips, giving her an expression of much gentleness and great goodness, quite in keeping with her nature.

But Paula!—what words could truly describe the wondrous beauty of lovely Paula Garstin, the fair young girl whose life was destined to drift into the strangest romance and dark, cruel tragedy that pen ever portrayed!

She had a round, dimpled face, all lilacs and roses; eyes as blue as bluebells that grew in deep and lonely woods; a mouth like the crimson heart of a wild red rose; the prettiest little nose and dimpled chin imaginable; small pearly teeth white as milk, and a wealth of fluffy, clustering curls as golden as the sunshine.

She was taller by half a head than Mildred—a slim, dainty little creature, a gay, bright, wilful, rollicksome maiden who always won people's hearts at first sight.

It must be truthfully admitted that there was a little of the flirt about her, for, all unknown to Mildred, the innocent glances from those bluebells of eyes had set a score or more of male hearts to throbbing tumultuously.

"Have nothing to say to the new foreman, my darling," warned Mildred, as she parted from her pretty young sister at her place of business, and the same wish came to Mildred that had come to her so many times—that they could have both found employment in the same shop, that she might have watched over pretty, wilful Paula, the better.

Mildred had found employment in a cotton factory; Paula, in a silk mill a few houses distant.

Mrs. Garstin felt it keenly when her girls' paths had drifted apart. It brought back to her mind a little incident that had happened years before, and which she had never been able to forget night or day since.

She had been walking through a country lane with her children, holding each by the hand. At a certain turn in the road she came upon an old gipsy woman sitting beside a shallow brook.

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"Will you have your fortune and those of the pretty dears told, lady!" cried the old crone, springing up and barring the narrow path.

"No," Mrs. Garstin had answered, impatiently, as she pushed her firmly but gently aside that they might proceed. "I do not believe anyone on earth has power to foresee possible events of the future. I would not listen to such jargon, let alone pay for such nonsense."

The wickedest laugh that ever was heard broke from the old crone's lips.

"You hold your head very high now, my proud, fine lady, but the time will come when you will wish that you had listened well to my words. Heed well the little I disclose to you: Your future will be an unhappy one. You will lose what wealth you have, and you will know then the direst poverty; but there is worse still in store for you: your dark-faced child will go through life without much sorrow or much joy, but hark you, the golden haired one you hold by the hand would be better off if she lay dead at your feet than live to meet the future Fate has mapped out for her. Love will be her rock ahead; her beauty will be her curse; let her beware—take care!"

With a very white face Mrs. Garstin had hurried on; but she could not help but hear the words that were shrieked out after her.

Part of that prophecy had come true. She lost her husband, and as time wore on she grew poorer and poorer, but she managed to keep actual want from the door where her treasures were by giving music lessons.

But there came a day when sickness came upon her, and then the one great dread of her life came about—her beautiful Mildred and her lovely Paula were forced to face the world to earn their bread—or starve!

When Mildred grew old enough to comprehend the meaning of the words, she was so grave, so sensible a girl that the poor mother confided the gipsy's terrible prophecy to her.

"Do not let it trouble you, mamma dear," Mildred returned, throwing her arms about her weeping mother's neck. "We will take extra care in watching over and guarding our darling Paula."

And only the day before our story opens, Mildred and her mother were discussing how wondrously beautiful the girl was growing, and Mrs. Garstin's face looked very pitiful and grave.

"Have no fear, mamma!" cried Mildred. "Our darling Paula is only seventeen—she does not dream yet of love or a lover."

It was well for them that they did not know that ere the week waned Paula was to meet the hero who was to change the whole world for her—and whether it was for weal or for woe most bitter, the after pages of our story must tell.

When Mildred parted from her sister, she made haste to reach the factory, and she was so very busy she thought less than usual of her that day. But all through the long hours there was a feeling of great uneasiness in her heart, a depression she could not shake off.

Happening to glance from the window during the noon hour, she saw across the street a sight that held and riveted her attention! a young girl just vanishing within a carriage. In the fleeting glimpse she had of her it struck Mildred that the girl was wonderfully like Paula. A young and handsome man—quite the handsomest she had ever seen—sprang in after her, and the vehicle rolled swiftly down the street, turning the first corner.

"How much that looked like Paula," she thought.

Then she laughed at herself, calling herself the greatest kind of a goose to imagine for one moment that the vanishing form she had caught such a fleeting glimpse of was Paula's.

The very thoughts of her sister driving off in that carriage with the handsome stranger was preposterous.

Paula was not waiting at the corner for her as usual, and Mildred hurried on homeward alone.

Mrs. Garstin looked up in wonder as Mildred entered alone.

"Where is Paula?" she asked, anxiously.

"Is she not home?" returned Mildred.

"No," responded her mother, looking her thin

hands nervously together. "What can detain her, I wonder?"

"No doubt she has extra work to-night, mamma; you know this is their busy season, and I heard her say only yesterday that they wanted some of the girls to put in extra time this week. I am sure it is that which is detaining her. Take your medicine, mamma, and do not worry about Paula, she will be home soon now."

Mrs. Garstin took the medicine from Mildred's hand, and soon after fell into a deep sleep.

The clock on the mantelpiece struck eight, then slowly crept round to nine. Mildred was beside herself with terror. Should she arouse her mother and tell her she had decided to go to the shop for Paula?

Suddenly she remembered the carriage and the girl who had entered it who looked so much like Paula she had quite forgotten it until this moment.

She was about to speak when suddenly a wild cry broke from her mother's lips and she sat bolt upright in her bed.

"It was only a dream, then. Thank goodness it is only a dream, Mildred," she sobbed. "I thought I saw Paula standing on the brink of a cold, deep river, beside a dark, handsome young man, when suddenly, and without warning, he turned upon her, seized her by the white throat, and hurled her down into the horrible mad waves. She rose, and the dim night echoed with her wild cries of 'Mother! mother! for the love of Heaven save me!' He leaned over the brink and hurled her back. The waters closed over her golden head, and she never rose again! Oh, Mildred, it was such a dream! What time is it Mildred? Has Paula not come yet?"

CHAPTER II.

MILDRED GARSTIN trembled in spite of her great effort to appear calm as she listened to her mother's excited words.

"You have not told me the time yet, Mildred, and if Paula has come home or not," Mrs. Garstin repeated, anxiously. "Look at the clock; I cannot see across the room without my glasses, you know."

Mildred raised her great dark eyes, heavy with unshed tears, and saw that it was twenty minutes after nine.

But she dared not tell her mother this; it might cost her her life, the shock to her nerves would be so great.

"It is after seven, mamma," she faltered; and she cried out silently to Heaven to pardon her for her first deliberate falsehood to her dear old mother. "I will slip on my hat and jacket, and go and meet her, mamma," she added, doing her best to speak unconcernedly; "you will not mind sitting alone a few moments?"

"No," returned her mother.

A moment more and Mildred was in the street, sitting like a storm-driven swallow down the crowded thoroughfare, until, panting and out of breath, she reached the shop.

To her consternation, it was already closed, and she came to the conclusion that she had certainly missed Paula on her way going home.

As she stood there the night porter passed on his rounds.

Mildred stepped up to him timidly.

"Could you tell me how long since the girls left the shop to-night?" she asked, without hardly knowing why she ventured this question.

The man turned and looked at her.

"Oh, it's you, Miss Garstin," he said, recognizing her as the grave, quiet sister of the pretty, wilful Paula, the prettiest girl in the place. "Why, don't you know they had a half holiday to-day, on account of the manager's son getting married?"

A thunderbolt falling from a clear, sunlit sky, or a volcano bursting beneath her feet could not have startled Mildred more.

She looked at the man for a moment, dumb-founded with amazement at his intelligence, and in that moment the darkness of death seemed

closing in around her. By the greatest effort she controlled herself.

"Most of the ladies were glad enough to get a half-day off," laughed the man, "and your sister was wonderfully delighted," he went on. "I shook my finger at her as she went dancing down the steps and down the street, leaning on the arm of the handsome new foreman; and by the way, Miss Garstin, I want to say a few words to you on the quiet about that young fellow—a word of warning like. Pierce Dudley is as handsome as a Greek god—as women say; but few of them know that his heart is black to the core. Every new face attracts his fancy, and he soon rides away and leaves the owner of it with a blasted life. A young girl's love, when once he has gained it, is as little to him as the field-dandelion he crushes under his heel as he passes them. I was sorry when I noticed that he had set his eyes upon your pretty young sister Paula."

"There is one thing more about him that I want to tell you about; everyone don't know of it. Mr. Mansfield, the owner of the business, is Pierce Dudley's uncle. The old gent has two nephews—this Dudley, and another young fellow, Gregor Thorpe, who is as much of a gentleman as Dudley is a scoundrel. He used to be here in the business, and it was an open question which one of the two would eventually be old Mansfield's heir."

"One day there was a terrible row in the counting-house, and the upshot of the matter was, Gregor Thorpe came out of the counting-house as pale as death, but with his head held as proud as a king's."

"Good-bye," he said, as he passed a group of us men; "I am going away, never to return. Good-bye to you all."

"There was great sorrow all through the place, for everyone loved Mr. Gregor. Why, there was not a man of us but would have laid down his life for him. He was bookkeeper, and paid us off, and many a time I have known him, when different ones were short of money from sickness or death at home, to slip an extra bit into their envelope from his own pocket. Heaven bless him!"

"And all that time Mr. Pierce was loafing about, and great was the terror of more than one heart when it was given out that Mr. Pierce was to be foreman. But I must be moving on. Good-night to you, Miss Mildred. Isn't it getting late for you to be out alone in the streets of London?"

And with these kindly words he moved on, leaving the girl standing there cold as death, and with the heart in her bosom almost turned into stone.

She had tried to speak, but her tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of her mouth, and the wild, startled cry that welled up from her very soul made no sound on her lips.

She sank down half-fainting on the stone step. Her thoughts were all chaos. Only one idea seemed to stand out clear before her—Paula had left the place at noon and she had not come home.

Where had she gone—what had become of her? And through her confused thoughts, the remembrance of the words of the old-night porter came to her. "She went down the street with the new foreman, leaning on his arm."

How could she go back to her mother with this story—the poor old invalid mother who idolized Paula so, whose star of hope the girl was—the fond old mother who thought the sun never rose or set on so fair a creature.

"Heaven help me! what shall I do? Heaven direct me!" was her agonised cry as she sank on her knees on the cold pavement and raised her terrified young face to the dark night sky. "Oh, how can I go back to mother and tell her the awful story?"

A dense fog had gathered over the deserted streets, and a few drops of rain pattered softly down on the girl's face. She quite believed that the angels were weeping with pity for her terrible woe. Oh, Heaven, where was Paula, and how could she return without her?

But to return to Paula and learn her strange fate—surely the most pitiful that ever befell a young girl.

When she had parted from Mildred she made all possible haste to the place of business where she was employed, and in her eagerness to cross the street she did not see the pair of horses that came tearing down the road at a terrific pace until she found herself under their iron hoofs.

As in a dream, she dimly heard great shouts of terror from the bystanders, and in that awful instant of time a strong hand grasped her and hurried her backward.

Paula did not swoon—she was dazed—but realised that a pair of strong arms held her, while a great throng was gathering about them, and that the owner of those strong arms had saved her, by a hair's breadth, from a horrible death.

Paula raised her blue eyes, suffused with grateful tears to his, and saw a pair of earnest brown eyes gazing down into her own, and quite the handsomest masculine face she had ever beheld.

"Are you hurt?" he asked in a deep, rich musical voice, relaxing his hold as she struggled out of his arms.

"No," answered Paula, "only—a little bit frightened."

She heard the bystanders on all sides of her declaring that they had never beheld a more daring act of bravery, that at the risk of his own life he had snatched her from the very jaws of death, and that the great bruise over his temple was where the iron hoof of the horse had grazed it.

"I shall never forget the debt of gratitude I owe you for saving my life, sir," she said, tremulously.

"I did no more than my duty, Miss Garstin," he answered, simply.

"You know me, sir!" gasped Paula, in great amazement.

"Yes," he replied, with a deep flush mantling his face for an instant. "I have seen you coming and going from my uncle's business for the last two months. I am Gregor Thorpe—Mr. Mansfield's nephew. I was bookkeeper there, and was always in the office, which accounts for your never having seen me. I am not there now."

He wondered what she would think if she knew that he had fallen madly in love with her at first sight, and that waking or sleeping, his life had been one dream of her since that hour.

"May I see you again some time, Miss Garstin?" he asked, eagerly, as he held her fluttering little hand one moment at parting.

"If you would care for it," she faltered, with a deep blush and a shy drooping of those bluebell eyes.

Ah! if she only knew how much he cared for it! he thought; but he simply said:

"Thank you; you are very good to grant my request. I will call some time this week to see if your narrow escape has affected you any more than you think at present."

He raised his hat, and, with a low bow to Paula, turned and walked away, leaving the memory of his pleasant smile and handsome face behind him.

Paula was just ten minutes late; but, despite the strictness of the orders on this point, Pierce Dudley, the new foreman, made no comment, and all the rest of the girls noticed with jealous eyes that he did not mark the time down against her, as he had done with two or three other girls who had come in late but a moment before—even threatening to discharge them if it happened again.

"There's nothing like having a pretty pink-and-white face!" said one of the girls, with a disagreeable laugh. "And did you know," she went on in a shrill whisper, "that it was Mr. Pierce Dudley himself that put that red rose on Paula Garstin's loom? I saw him myself. I thought last week that you were going to be the favourite, Maggie Lisle, but Paula has out you out, it seems," she added.

Maggie Lisle's face grew deathly white. She made no secret of her infatuation for Pierce Dudley, and that they had been the best of friends long before he had entered his uncle's business.

Paula was in the best of spirits that morning, and Dudley lingered at her loom like one fasci-

nated; and he even went so far as to separate a small bud from the rose, and place it in the lapel of his coat.

As soon as he quitted the room, Maggie Lisle came over to Paula Garstin, and stood before her with folded arms, a livid face, and eyes fairly glowing with rage.

"This thing has gone far enough, Paula Garstin," she hissed. "Know this: Pierce Dudley is my lover. Encourage him any more—flirt with him any more, if you dare! You are not to look at him, even."

Paula raised her golden head with the pride of a young duchess, and a scornful laugh broke from her red lips.

"If that is a challenge, I accept it," she cried in her clear, shrill voice. "If Mr. Dudley likes to talk to me better than he likes to talk to you, it is none of your business. Your lover, indeed! Ha! ha! ha! That is a splendid joke! Why, I could have him for my lover, if I wanted him, in spite of all you could do or say; and I have half a mind to take him, too, just for pure spite—so there!"

"If you take my lover from me, you might as well sign your death-warrant, Paula Garstin!" responded the girl in an intense voice. "Mark well my words; your life or—our mine would pay the forfeit!"

CHAPTER III.

"If there is anything on earth I detest, it is a jealous girl who is scared out of her wits lest any other girl looks at the man she cares for," cried Paula, furiously, stamping a mite of a foot.

"You are playing with edged tools," muttered the girl in the same intense voice, that might have warned Paula. "I dare you to flirt with him from this moment!" cried Maggie, furiously.

"And I accept your 'dare,' as you phrase it," retorted Paula, the colour rising to her cheeks and her two eyes flashing like twin stars. "I will flirt with him to my heart's content. I will take him away from you, if I can, after what you have just said—if it cost me my two eyes."

"It may cost you that and more," returned the girl, turning quickly on her heel, for she had just espied Pierce Dudley entering the door at the further end of the room.

He came straight up to Paula and leaned over the curly head bent over the loom.

"Miss Garstin—Paula—little Paula," he said, in a low, eager voice, "the shop is about to close work for half-a-day, so you will have a holiday. What do you say to going on the river with me this afternoon? It's a little cloudy now, but the day will turn out fine, I am sure."

Paula knew that the girl standing at the loom behind her would tell Maggie Lisle every word she uttered, and so she said, carelessly enough:

"A row on the river—oh, that would be charming! I would be delighted to go with you, Mr. Dudley."

"We can take lunch at a restaurant, and go right from there," he declared. "Get ready as soon as you can. Walk straight out; that will be all right. I will join you outside."

Paula had made the promise hastily enough; but the moment he spoke of going directly from the restaurant, she thought of her mother and Mildred, and her cheeks paled to the hue of a white dewdrop.

But there was no help for it; she had said "Yes," and she must keep her word, she told herself. And then what a triumph over Maggie Lisle it would be to walk triumphantly off with Pierce Dudley, knowing she had left Maggie behind her wild with jealousy and the rest of the girls fuming with rage!

She knew right well that neither her mother nor Mildred would have countenanced so mad a freak.

"Go, enjoy yourself; they will never know of it. You can return by six o'clock," whispered the tempter to her heart as the girl hesitated.

We all know what happens to those who hesitate.

The thought of Maggie coolly daring her decided her. She would go, no matter what came of it.

The luncheon seemed a wonderful affair to Paula, this poor, pretty toy of dire poverty who had only the very plainest of fare at her humble home. Chicken, jelly, fruits and loes; cake that would have delighted an epicure; wonderful strawberries and luscious peaches!

She wished—oh, so much!—that her mother and Mildred had some of that fairy lunch; and the longing came upon her with renewed force to be rich some day—marry a lord, or a duke, perhaps, and have all such fine things every day of her life.

Pierce Dudley laughed as he noticed how she was revelling in theainties.

"Do you object to my taking a glass of wine, Paula?" he asked. "I am accustomed to take it for luncheon."

She flushed and looked confused.

"Just as if you should ask me, Mr. Dudley!" she answered; but it delighted her, all the same, that he consulted her.

She never knew that he was half so agreeable, she told herself.

He ordered the wine, which he assured her was as harmless as water, and, as Paula shook her head when he proffered her a tiny glass, he managed to get away with the contents of the bottle himself.

A short drive in a carriage brought them to where Dudley's boat was moored.

"Aren't you afraid of the water, Mr. Dudley?" Paula asked as she took her seat in the boat and they pushed off.

"I ought to be, but I'm not," he declared, "though I cannot swim. I always manage to float."

Paula looked a little nervous and thoughtful at this, and he laughed aloud as he saw the expression of consternation on her pretty face, and she laugh sounded a trifle bolsterous to her.

"Oh, don't let's go far from shore, Mr. Dudley!" she entreated.

"Very well," he said, seeming to reverse the direction in which they had been going.

For some little time he was the best of company—gay, witty, and so gallant that he actually surprised her; but she grew quite alarmed to hear him laugh hilariously at his own pungent speeches, and his tongue was growing thicker and his flattering speeches more flippant.

Suddenly the awful truth broke upon her; the wine he had taken had flown to his head—he was by no means himself; and in the very moment she made this horribly appalling discovery he drew a slim silver flask from an inner breast-pocket, and, with the words, "I know you don't mind," raised it to his lips.

"Oh, Mr. Dudley!" cried Paula, now thoroughly terrified, "don't take any more I pray you! Do take me home—see, there is a heavy fog settling over the water. In less than ten minutes from now we won't be able to see where the shore is. Please turn back!"

"I never want to go back again!" said Dudley. "It is my intention to throw away the oars soon and drift where'er destiny wills—to some fairy island where we shall live for love and each other all the rest of our lives. How would you like that, my beautiful little Paula?" he cried, more boisterously still.

The girl looked at him with horror-struck, dilated eyes. She realised the full force of the awful truth now. She was alone with him in that little eggshell of a boat, and he was greatly under the influence of wine. The fog had come upon them with the swiftness of a cyclone, it seemed to her, and enveloped them so completely that she could scarcely see his face from where he sat, a few feet from her, idly tralling the oars through the water.

Oh, if she were only back in her dear old humble home, with her mother and Mildred. Oh, why did she ever come! Heaven had punished her cruelly for her deception to those who loved her so well—thinking she could spend such a gay, merry day, and they would never find it out.

The tears rolled down her lovely white face, and she sobbed aloud in her anguish. Oh, Heaven! where was the shore, and would she ever reach it alive! And the mad thought came to her that she wished she had died in Gregor

Thorpe's strong arms that morning, rather than have lived to face a fate like the one which menaced her.

"What! crying?" cried Dudley, in a maudlin voice. "That won't do. Let me kiss those—pearly tears away, my—my dear." And, as he uttered the words, he stood up in the rocking boat, and took a step towards her.

"Don't dare to come near me, Mr. Dudley!" panted Paula.

"And who is going to prevent me!" sneered Dudley, insolently.

"I shall scream!" cried the girl, in terror.

"Do so," he answered, with a loud laugh.

"Who is there to hear you, pray! and besides, they would say to you:

"If a body meet a body coming thro' the rye,
If a body kiss a body near a body cry!"

"You are no gentleman to terrify an unprotected girl like this. I—I—wish to Heaven I had not come with you," sobbed Paula, almost hysterical by this time. "I—I—ought not to— you—you are so much of a stranger to me."

"When young girls consent to go out pleasuring with strangers, they must take the consequences if they ask them for a kiss," laughed Dudley, uproariously. "That's an old saying, and, by George! it's a true one. What are you so prudish for! You're only a little work-girl, working like a Turk in my uncle's shop for twenty shillings a week. Egad! how you ought to consider it a mighty compliment for a fellow like me to speak to you at all. And I wouldn't, but you're such a trim, jaunty little daisy. Come now; give me a kiss and we'll make up this little difference of ours. A lover's quarrel, by George! Ha! ha! ha!" And again he made a lunge forward and caught her wrist.

"Let me go!" screamed Paula, as he attempted to put the threat that he would take a kiss anyhow, whether she would or not, into execution. With superhuman strength she pushed him from her. Oh, Heaven! the horror of it! It caused him to lose his balance, and over he went with a splash and a dull thud into the water, and the river closed over his head, shutting out the dull red face and blood-shot eyes instantly from her horror-struck gaze.

"Oh, I have killed him—I have killed him!" the girl shrieked in terror, as she screamed loudly for help.

But those shrill cries brought no assistance. He did not rise again, or if he did, it must have been some few feet away, and the dense fog utterly hid him from the sight of her strained eyes.

Then, as she began to realise that she could not save him, she remembered her own peril.

There was no Gregor Thorpe to risk his brave young life to save her now. She was out alone on the treacherous water, at the mercy of the wind and the waves.

"Oh, mother! Mildred! am I never to see you again?" she cried, wildly.

Time seemed to fly swift-winged by her. Almost before she was aware of it, the darkness of night had crept upon her, and now great rain-drops began to patter down on her terrified face.

Oh, Heaven! oh, Heaven! the pity of it! If she had only asked her mother or Mildred if she could go! She would die here in the river and they would never know her fate!

The wind moaned like a banshee, and the little boat was whirled about like an eggshell in the swirling, white-capped waves.

She could only sit in the bow of the boat, clutching its sides with her frantic hands, straining her eyes through the darkness.

"Oh, mother! oh, Mildred!" moaned the girl.

Suddenly she saw a flash of red light ahead. Was it the lightning flashing so furiously, or—could it be some steamer crossing that desert track of wild waves! Paula asked herself in terror.

She cowered down in the boat and watched breathlessly. A white glare of lightning lighted up the scene for one instant of time, but in that instant she had seen the huge, dark steamer but a little distance from her, and her little boat

commenced to spin round and round. She realised with awful terror, too great for words, that she was in the steamer's path. In an instant of time it would be upon her.

Paula's wild cry was lost in the booming of the steamer as she cut her way swiftly through the darkness and the terrific storm.

"Good-bye, dear mother! good-bye, dear Mildred!" she breathed, faintly; and in that awful moment it was strange that the face of Gregor Thorpe should sweep across her memory.

Nearer, nearer came the red light. Oh, Heaven! how the boat whirled! Her hands relaxed their hold, and she fell face downward in the bottom of the boat, and at that instant the steamer struck the little skiff with tremendous force.

CHAPTER IV.

MILDRED GARSTIN'S grief as she rocked herself to and fro on the lower stone step of the building, attempting to face the cruel blow that had fallen upon her, can better be imagined than described.

"Oh, what shall I do? How can I ever summon courage to go home to poor mother and tell her what has occurred! It will kill her, yes, it will kill her!"

She was not aware that any one was near, for she had heard no footsteps, until she heard a voice close beside her saying:

"What is the matter, my good girl—are you ill, or have you been discharged from here for any reason?"

Mildred raised her dark, tear-swollen eyes and shook her head, and the speaker saw her death-white face clearly by the light of the flickering gas-lamps.

"Can this be you, Miss Garstin! I cannot be mistaken. You are the sister of Miss Paula Garstin, who is employed here," he exclaimed, in a tone of surprise. "I am Gregor Thorpe, the nephew of Mr. Mansfield, the proprietor," he explained for the second time that day, adding: "I have often noticed you with your sister. If you are in distress, pray permit me to offer you my services."

Mildred looked eagerly up into his face—that kindly, honest, handsome face with the sympathetic, hazel-brown eyes that women always trusted at the first glance, and the longing in her heart was great to confide her sorrow to him.

She felt if she did not confide in some one she would go mad. And surely this was the Mr. Gregor Thorpe, that the old porter had told her was so good, so noble, and true! And with bitter sobs, Mildred told him the whole story—of Paula's disappearance, and how the porter had seen her leave the mill at noon in company with Mr. Dudley, and she had not come home, and that she dared not go home to her mother, who was so ill, and tell her this, for the shock would kill her.

Gregor Thorpe listened in horror to that recital; but not a muscle of his face moved betraying his grief; but his voice was very husky as he answered:

"I am so very glad to have come across you, Miss Garstin. Believe me, I shall do everything in human power to aid you in finding your sister and restoring her to you," he said, earnestly, and he forbore from telling her just then how he had saved her lovely young sister from serious injury that morning; the girl's nerves were wrought up to so great a pitch that any new trouble would overcome her. "Let me accompany you to your home, Miss Garstin, and I will break the sad intelligence to your mother, assuring her the while, though, that I will find her daughter for her, or die in the attempt. Come, take my arm, my poor girl; you are trembling like an aspen leaf. We will take a cab to your home."

There was no relating the firm, gentle tone and manner of Mr. Thorpe.

Mildred had always been timid, especially of accepting the slightest favour, or trusting strangers, but she would have trusted Mr. Thorpe with her very life.

The clock in an adjacent bellry struck ten as the cab stopped before the tenement house in which Mildred lived.

"How humble an abode for beautiful little Paula, who is as sweet and dainty as a white rose!" thought Thorpe, as he followed Mildred up the dark, steep, narrow stair-way that led to her home.

The girl pushed open the door and invited Gregor to enter.

"Mamma," she began, tremulously, turning to the old lady sitting in the high backed rocking-chair, with her face pressed close against the glass watching down on the street below, and who had not apparently heard them enter, "mamma, dear—this is a louder voice, but still tremulous—"I have brought a—stranger to see you. He is one of Mr. Mansfield's nephews of the place of business where Paula is employed."

Still the figure in the arm-chair did not change its position.

"I think she is asleep, sir," murmured the girl, placing a chair for him, and crossing hurriedly to her mother's side.

"Mother," she began, "I went down to the—

the—"

The sentence ended in the wildest cry that ever broke from human lips.

"Oh, Heaven! oh, Heaven! my mother is dead!" And without another word Mildred

Gregor Thorpe had discovered this the very instant that he crossed the threshold and his eyes fell upon the rigid figure, the half-averted face with the grey pallor lying on it, and the stare of the glassy eyes; and the horror of the situation held him spell-bound.

With all possible haste Gregor raised the girl from the floor, and placed her upon the couch, and summoned help from among the neighbours in the building.

"Poor Mrs. Garstin is dead, her daughter is overcome with grief, and where is Paula!" they all asked one of the other, looking askance at the handsome stranger who was making himself so officious about the premises.

Gregor compressed his lips tightly together, and his face flushed with anger. He could not endure to hear them speak thus of beautiful Paula.

A week had passed ere Mildred Garstin opened her eyes to a realisation of what was transpiring about her.

She found herself in a neighbour's apartment, and the kindly woman bending over her told her how young Mr. Thorpe—they had all found out who he was by this time—had taken charge of everything, and that he had scarcely ate or slept till after the funeral was over and she had been placed in good hands, and that he had advanced money for everything, leaving a goodly little sum to insure her being well cared for.

"But," added the woman in the same breath, "we all wondered where your sister Paula was that he did not send for her, and they do go so far as to say that your sister ran away, and that is what killed your mother, and— Oh, there is Mr. Thorpe now; I know his step. He has come to inquire how you are getting along. Would you wish to see him?"

"Oh, yes, yes, yes!" sobbed Mildred, "Oh, so much!"

Mrs. Martin admitted Gregor; but she had grace enough to leave the room as he took his seat by the bedside.

"They have told me all," sobbed Mildred. "Poor, poor, mother! And I have been crying as though my heart would break, and—and Paula—has she not come home yet, Mr. Thorpe?" the girl whispered with the agony of death on her face.

"I am still searching for her," he responded, huskily. "As soon as I could leave you and your dear mother, I went at once to my cousin, Pierce Dudley's apartments. I found him, and he disclaimed any knowledge of the whereabouts of your sister Paula. He says that he invited her to go rowing with him, but she replied that she had a prior engagement. She took luncheon with



THE WICKEDEST LAUGH THAT EVER WAS HEARD BROKE FROM THE OLD CRONE'S LIPS.

him, however, and he parted from her at the café door. I have searched for her in every nook and corner of the city. I have engaged the best detective service that money could procure, but not the slightest clue can we find."

He did not attempt to check the wild sobs that shook the girl's frame. Such intense grief as hers must find outlet in tears, or she would go mad.

At that moment the door opened, and Mrs. Martin looked into the room.

"A letter for you, Miss Mildred," she said.

"Oh, perhaps it is from Paula," sobbed Mildred, in a voice that only Gregor heard.

"It is from the factory where you are employed," said Gregor, handing it to her.

With nervous fingers Mildred tore open the envelope.

The sheet bore the heading of the cotton-mill, and contained but a few words, which read as follows:

"MISS GABSTIN,—You are hereby notified that your services will be no longer required at this establishment. Respectfully,

"DENNING & MARGROVE."

Mildred handed the curt letter of dismissal to Gregor. She could utter no word if her very life depended on it.

"Poor girl! trouble never comes singly," he said pityingly. "Have no fear," he added, "you shall not starve. I will try and get you a place quite as good in another mill. I will see the parties this afternoon, and let you know to-morrow morning what success I have met with."

"You are very good, sir," sobbed Mildred, "to take so much interest in a stranger. I—I do not know what I should have done if it had not been for you."

"It is every man's duty to do what he can to alleviate distress," he answered, quietly. "Try to get strong as quickly as you can. I hope to find you sitting up to-morrow," he added, cheerfully.

When he took leave of her, all the brightness seemed to go with him.

Mildred's recovery would have been more rapid if she had not grieved so bitterly over the loss of Paula. Where had she gone! and was the girl living or dead! were the agonised thoughts that tortured her almost to madness.

When Mrs. Martin entered, Mildred confided to her the new trouble that had fallen upon her—that she had lost her place in the mill, and straightway she learned the cruel lesson that one woman should never confide her sorrow to another.

Almost the next words Mrs. Martin uttered convinced her of this.

"I am sorry to hear that you've lost your place, Mildred," she said; "that will make it so hard for you to pay rent for your rooms. I saw one of the girls from your factory yesterday, and she said you wouldn't be there long, and, as a good tenant happened along just then, I let your rooms to him. That reminds me that I came in just now to tell you that you'd have to get your things out at once, for the other tenant moves in to-morrow noon."

"But I haven't a place to put them, Mrs. Martin," sobbed Mildred. "It is so sudden."

"I can't help that," declared the frate landlady, decisively. "Business is business. You haven't the money to pay me my rent in advance for another month, have you?"

"No," sobbed Mildred. "We were never able to lay anything by. Poor mother's illness took all we made."

"And I never heard anything like the conduct of that sister of yours. It was scandalous of her to run away from home and never come back to look upon her mother's face—even in death. Yea, a most scandalous affair, all the neighbours agree. If she came back to-day I would shut my door in her face. She should not cross my threshold."

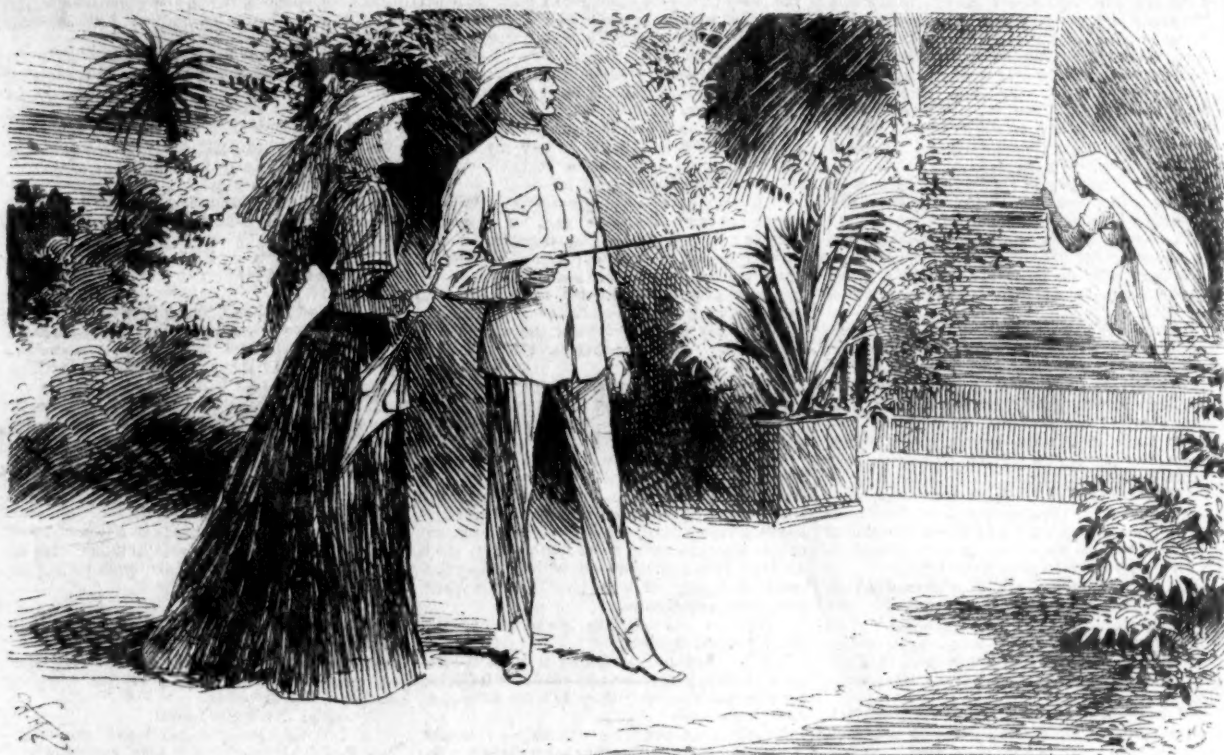
"Mrs. Martin," panted Mildred, struggling up from her pillow, "speak of me as lightly as you

will, but you must not talk so of Paula in my presence. You are stabbing me to the heart. Please go and leave me to myself."

(To be continued.)

THE *Court Journal* notes, with interest, a fashion penetrating even to what it cautiously particularises as "the most exalted" circles. The following is the discovery culled intact from the "exalted" columns of *Royalty's* favoured chronicle:—"The practice of 'pink' pill-taking, so lavishly encouraged by bold advertisement, is said to be making upward progress in Society, and report has it that the product of the 'only genuine' manufacturer—the pill with the seven-worded name so often displayed before our eyes with piteous entreaty to shun all pills with a 'missing-word' in their title—has penetrated to the most exalted circles. However this may be, it is not to be questioned that pale people in the highest walks of Society are availing themselves of 'Dr. Williams' discovery and comparing notes, not without satisfaction at the improvement in their personal appearance thereon resulting.

A NUMBER of the horses used by the Russian army have been fitted with shoes of aluminium, as a test of the practicability of this material for such purposes. In making the test the front feet are provided with the aluminium shoes, the hind feet being fitted with shoes of ordinary material. The experiment proves that the shoes are much lighter, more durable and appear to give the horse more comfort than any material heretofore tried. If extended use confirms the present opinion, a new departure will be inaugurated. It would be difficult to find anything more awkward and cumbersome than some of the shoes with which horses are provided. In order to insure durability the animal is weighted with an amount of metal which most seriously impedes locomotion.



BERRY SEES THE WOMAN THEY HAVE SO MISTRUSTED AND DISLIKED PEERING THROUGH THE WINDOW.

BROWN AS A BERRY.

—10:—

CHAPTER XXIV.

"How do you like India?"

The common-place question, drawled out in a languid, unemotional voice behind her, makes Berry jump up from her seat. To her surprise it is Mr. Blythe who stands there, with outstretched hand and a friendly smile.

He looks so calm and unruffled, so exactly as if he had just emerged from his cabin on board ship, that she cannot refrain from a little hysterical laugh as the memories come surging up into her heart of a past, in which he played a minor part instead of being its hero as he had planned.

"Won't you shake hands!" he says, coaxingly.

"Of course I will! Why not?" frankly abandoning her fingers to his grasp.

"Why not, indeed! It would, in my opinion, have been a very objectionable piece of cruelty to have refused."

He sits down on the seat beside her, and with comfortable familiarity draws away her fan.

"Let me do it. I can flit a fan as well as any Spaniard!"

And, on proof, his words confirm themselves, the long, slow, sweeping waves bringing more wind than all Berry's short, vigorous jerks have been able to effect.

It is a day when even to breathe is an exertion. There is no sun, only a warm, grey haze rising from the valleys and obscuring the distant hills, and not one single breeze springs up to freshen and cool the lambent air.

Even the tennis-players seem to have lost their energy to-day, and the dancers stop every now and then to gasp for breath.

In neither amusement does Berry join. She has been forced hitherto to give colour to the supposed passion for gaiety which she has affected in order to draw her sister more from home, but at

the last moment, with annoying perversity, Eve has slipped out of it, and stayed away. Berry feels that she has fallen into her own trap, and is justly indignant at her misfortune.

"Do you enjoy yourselves in this deadly-lively fashion every afternoon?" asks Mr. Blythe, with assumed interest.

"It is a rule with very few exceptions. We are so afraid of seeming bored with each other, that we don't mind being it."

"I see, you do not like India!" drily.

"No."

There is a metallic sound in her voice that shows him he has touched on a sore subject. He looks at her curiously. What has the country done to so awaken her resentment? He cannot guess that the most serious perplexities that have entered her young life came to her here, and that she is dreading more what still might come.

"After all, there are less pleasant places!" he remarks, thoughtfully.

"I dare say!" doubtfully, and then: "The roses are very fine here," with the air of one who is doing "Murray" for a visitor's delectation.

"Indeed! I have not noticed. The only ones I looked for I missed!" glancing meaningly at the pale cheeks into which, for the first time, a colour slowly rises. Her eyes droop, too, beneath his scrutiny.

"The heat is very great, greater than usual this year, they tell me. When did you come up?"

"Only yesterday, late in the afternoon. I should have been here before, only my gharrie broke down and the coolies, instead of putting their shoulders to the wheel like men, sat down and passed the hubble-bubble round. They said it was Kismet; I said it was—fiddle-de-dee!"

"They do not care for much work," smiling a little at the evident substitution of a milder for a stronger word.

"My experience is, they do not care for any, so long as they have a pie in their pockets."

"Tell me, what has brought you here?"

"Yourself in the first instance; and, secondly, I have come to look after the Governor-General. He wanted some one trustworthy, so they sent me."

"You are the new A.D.C.?"

"Exactly; I cannot but admire your perspicacity. By-the-bye I saw another of your admirers on the way up."

"I did not know that I had even one."

"Miss Cardell, did you do me the injustice to doubt my words when I spoke to you that day?"

"No, no!" she interposes hastily, fearing a repetition of his proposal. "Whom did you see?"

"Captain Carew; he mentioned you."

"It was very kind of him to remember. Was he looking well?" she asks, trying to keep all bitterness and eagerness out of her voice.

"Very well. They say he has become quite a lady's man of late—quite a general admirer. Formerly, on board ship, you know, he only admired you!"

"Or said he did—which is not always the same thing."

"Ha! have you discovered it already? Have you found out from personal experience that men were deceivers ever, and are still!"

"I don't know what you mean! I think you are very absurd," flushing angrily.

"Think me anything you please—only not false and not forgetful."

But Berry will not listen to him longer; she rises from her seat and, moving quickly away, is met by Laurence Le Sage.

"Will you dance with me, Miss Cardell?"

"Yes, I will," she returns with such vicious emphasis that he is startled.

"I beg your pardon!" he says, questioningly.

"I mean I shall be very pleased," she answers, in some confusion.

The next moment they are walking round the room, and Mr. Blythe, having followed them inside, stands idly watching her. She dances so

differently from the rest—with such old-fashioned simplicity and modesty, and yet gracefully too, doing nothing but justice to the tiny feet, that keep twinkling in and out. Mr. Blythe finds himself admiring the verve of her movements infinitely more than the style which he had hitherto affected. The other women seemed vulgar and *outré* in comparison as they cling so languidly, and sway backwards and forwards with such lingering steps. Even Mrs. Lee-Brooke, no whit behind the fashion, clutches her partner with convulsive closeness as she whirls round the room in his embrace.

"I always feel so thankful, when I watch them dance, that I have no sisters and no wife," says Captain Burdett, addressing himself to Mr. Blythe, whom he had met the night before at the club.

"Humph!" returns Mr. Blythe with a certain doubtfulness, not having quite such strict ideas upon the subject, and not feeling such intense gratitude for the lack of a helpmate.

"Perhaps the style is rather warm," he continues, as the other does not speak again. "It reminds one of Dante's seventh circle in Hell, where the lost spirits are swept unrelentingly before the whirlwind."

"The whirlwind of passion," sententially. "I suppose so. Women out here deteriorate sadly," shaking his head with a new accession of virtue, as he feels the wisdom of his choice.

"Are they so faultless at home?" "But Mr. Blythe is off in a dreamland, in which he and Berry figure as man and wife, and having sown all his wild oats he is content to live in an atmosphere of morality to which, perhaps, distance lends enchantment. It is out of the bounds of probability that she will refuse him twice."

"I quite agree with a saying of Lord Melbourne's, that it requires very strong health to put up with women at all," says Captain Burdett again, delighted with his apparently appreciative audience; but both audience and appreciation fall him now as Berry and Mr. Le Sage stop beside them.

He whistles softly to himself, as he notes Mr. Blythe's evident embarrassment and the manner in which it is relieved. Although he sees at first glance that there is no love on Berry's side, in his own mind he does not question the issue, knowing how many of England's daughters are yearly sacrificed, or sacrifice themselves, before Mammon's altar.

"I am going home," says Berry, a few minutes later, when the band, after a final clash of instruments, stops short. "My brother-in-law is out, and Eve will be alone."

"Let me escort you!" whispers Mr. Blythe, eagerly.

"And me!" says Captain Burdett, with an idea of, at least, staving off the unhappy end he takes for granted is in store for the girl he has known so long, and liked better, perhaps, than any other.

The women look after her a trifle enviously as she moves away between her double body-guard, laughing happily at the light badinage which passes to-and-fro. Is she going to pit her strength against them, which is already waning after the season's turmoil? The contest is scarcely fair, as is shown in the outset by her speedy appropriation of the two most personable men present. Mrs. Lee-Brooke shrugs her shoulders spitefully as she relates all she knows to Berry's disadvantage, and finding such willing listeners ultimately succumb to the temptation to invent.

Meantime, Berry, having no notion that gossip is already busy with her name, is freer to-day from care than she had been since she came. Ronald is going, or indeed must be already gone, and all anxiety on Eve's behalf can cease. Her own is a legitimate sorrow that it is no sin to indulge even were she not too healthily-minded to allow it to become a morbidness.

She is more like the Berry of old, and Anthony Burdett wonders whether, after all, he is mistaken, and she can really return this man's affection. Somehow, he does not think it likely. In spite of his good looks and well-built figure, there is something in Mr. Blythe's bold brown eyes that would be more likely to repel than attract

the fancy of so young and pure a girl. It is only women of mature age who seek the new excitement of loving a "splendid sinner" or marrying a "reformed rake."

At the entrance of Colonel Chester's compound they stop, and Berry holds out her hand to farewell. Captain Burdett takes it, but Spencer Blythe only bows over it gravely.

"If I might be allowed to pay my respects now to Mrs. Chester—" he suggests, suavely.—"If the lateness of the hour—"

Berry having no objection to offer, together they go towards the house, and, for a wonder, silently; Mr. Blythe being engaged in deep speculation as to the advisability of speaking again soon or leaving it for a time. Unwarned by his past experience, he still has a large faith in his own attractions and little fear for his fate.

When they came in sight of the verandah he stops suddenly and lays his hand on the girl's arm.

"Does your ayah often amuse herself like that? and don't you think it rather a dangerous pastime?" he whispers, in what for him is rather a hurried tone.

Following the direction of his gaze, she sees the woman they have so mistrusted and disliked crouching on the ground and peering through the window. She has moved away the corner of the chick the better to indulge her curiosity, but now as she hears the footsteps behind her, she is on her feet in a moment and, with a flimsy pretence of flicking off some dust from her petticoat, glides rapidly away.

"Why did you not take her to task?" asks Mr. Blythe, indignantly.

"What would have been the good? She knows I cannot scold her, and that even if I asked her what she was doing there, I should not understand her answer."

Struck by the weariness with which she speaks, Mr. Blythe turns and regards her keenly. All the light has faded from her face with the hope from her heart. She has seen a man's horse being led up and down, and recognising it, understands that Ronald is inside, and that it was his movements and Eve's that the ayah was so curiously watching. She does not look for a motive in the action at present; she only realises the shame of Eve being even suspected of wrongdoing. Heaven grant that the suspicion has not been verified!

CHAPTER XXV.

HALF-AN HOUR later the door of Berry's room is pushed quickly open, and Eve stands on the threshold.

Eve, with white face and shaking hands, and words trembling on her lips that she knows not how to utter. It seems as if all the beauty had been frightened from her face, and she looks as nearly plain as it is possible for her to do.

"Well, what is it?" asks Berry, coldly.

She had been so vexed with her sister's folly and Ronald's weakness that she had not had patience to address herself to either, simply ushering in Mr. Blythe and leaving them directly.

She is in no mood now to listen to the outpourings of confidence that she expects, nor to sympathise with Eve's sorrow at a parting that should have taken place long ago.

"It is—all—over!" gasps Eve, hoarsely.

"You have been mad to let it go on so long!" sternly.

"You do not understand. It is that he—Alex—knows everything!"

Then Berry grasps the whole situation, and is aroused from her indifference at once.

"It was the ayah!" she exclaims.

"Yes, how did you know?"

"I saw her looking in at your window when I came home."

"Then she did it purposely!" cries Eve, with an angry quiver, hating ill for the woman should she appear just then.

"Did what?"

"I must tell you all. After you left the room Mr. Blythe did not stay long, and Ronald and I were left alone again. He told me then how you

had been speaking to him and persuaded him to go. I cannot help thinking it was unwarrantable interference on your part."

"I did it for the best," meekly.

"I wish you had let it alone. We were all right before you came. You might have left me the poor consolation of his presence—the blessed knowledge of his love. I was nearly mad when he told me he must go; and when I saw him striding down the path I could not bear it; it seemed as if he were passing away from me for ever. So I scribbled a few lines on a scrap of paper and sent it after him—by the ayah."

"And she!"

"She gave it to my husband!"

"Did he read it?"

"Yes!"

"Well, what then?" breathlessly.

"He was coming in, but directly he read it he turned and went back again, and I ran straight to you. Berry! Berry! what shall I do! How can I meet her eyes!"

"You should have thought of that before!" is on the tip of Berry's tongue, but she refrains from upbraiding her sister while in such despair. Instead, she says—

"Tell him the truth, Berry, and ask him to forgive. Then you can begin life afresh, and with a better chance of happiness."

"Confess, when I am found out!" answers Eve scornfully; "he would value that at what it would be worth. If I had gone to him at first—"

"Ah! true."

Eve has sunk into a seat, and Berry sits on a stool before her, her head resting on her two hands and her elbows planted on her knees. Her big eyes are full of dismay at the domestic tragedy which threatens.

Presently, Eve begins again.

"If I thought the ayah had done it purposely, I—I would kill her!" she says, clenching her small hands and setting her teeth hard together.

As she speaks, through the open window comes the sound of a low, crooning, sing-song melody, such as natives sing to soothe a child to rest. Not a tremor is in the voice, not a hair-breadth's departure from the usual monotonous tones.

"It is the ayah singing to baby," says Berry, jumping to her feet, and raising her neck through the window in a vain effort to see.

"Yes, it is her; I know the voice!"

"Then surely she cannot have meant it!"

"I don't know," answers Eve, doubtfully; "she may have made a mistake. I told her to run quickly and give it to the ayah."

"Mentioning no name?"

"No; she had seen him leave the house a minute before, so I did not think it necessary."

"She may have made a mistake," says Berry, repeating Eve's words.

"Yes, she may. But what does it matter? What can anything matter now that Alex knows all? And, oh! Berry, he is home, I hear him in our room!"

Eve's terror is pitiable to see. She crouches on the floor and raises her hands to Berry in a mute call for aid, not daring to speak lest she should be discovered. Then Colonel Chester's footfall is heard outside, lingering as though hesitating whether to ask if his wife is there. He stops before the open door, nothing but the hanging purdah intervening between himself and the white, anguished face of his erring wife. Then he passes on, and both women breathe freely again, as, for a time at least, the danger is evaded.

"I want time—time for thought," gasps Eve.

"And he is dining at the club to-night!"

"Yes, we have quite three hours left us to devise some means of escape."

"What possible chance is there of that! It is your own handwriting that condemns you," is the hopeless reply, and Berry returns to her former seat, adopting her old attitude.

For a long time there is silence; Colonel Chester has gone out, and his wife sits tearfully watching the clock, dreading his return; knowing that nothing can save her then from his just resentment.

Berry's hand slips into hers and clasps it closely, as though she would protect her if she

could. But what can she do? Each moment they picture the injured husband in more terrible guise, fancy painting him in her angriest and most lurid colours, and fear lending him such exaggerated proportions that no change in his appearance could have surprised them had he returned then.

Presently Eve starts, as a sudden idea strikes her; but she does not lift her head as she puts it into words.

"Your writing is very like mine," she stammers, with a slight catching of her breath.

"I do not write so well," is the modest reply, not yet seeing where the motive of the remark lies.

"Perhaps not; but in a moment of excitement—"

"I do not understand."

"I mean I did not write my best, and it might easily be believed if you said that you had written it."

"I write a love-letter to Ronald May!" exclaims Barry, accentuating each word in her intense scorn.

"And there is no signature," goes on Eve, quickly, not daring to reason, only looking into her sister's face, with eyes that are pleading as though for dear life. "Save me! save me! you can if you will!"

She falls on her knees and clasps Barry round the feet, the tears streaming from her lovely eyes in uncontrollable torrents. The violent sobs are shaking her fragile frame so cruelly, that Barry—Barry with her strong, young limbs and healthy equilibrium, who has not known a day's illness in her life—is frightened.

"Hush! you will hurt yourself."

"And if I do!"

"For your own health's sake refrain!"

"My health; what is that? Nothing in comparison with my honour. I shall lose all I value in the world if I am turned from my husband's home—and what other fate can I expect! Barry, have you never seen those women hovering on the borderland of society, against whom nothing can be proved, but of whom the worst is suspected? Do you wish me to become such a one?"

"No, no—a thousand times no! I will stay with you always and defend you with my last breath!"

"Do not let that be necessary. Say you wrote that letter and save me."

"With a lie!"

"What of that! A lie is sometimes more noble than the truth."

"Oh, Eve, I cannot!"

"Then the consequences be on your own head. Is it you are shunning now—driving me to my fate?"

She moves towards the door and would have gone, but, fearing she knows not what Barry stretches out her hand and holds her fast.

"Eve, where are you going?"

"To Ronald; he is my last hope. If he forsakes me, too, I shall be desolate indeed."

"Are you mad!" whispers the girl, hoarsely.

"I dare say!"

"Or only wicked—dreadfully, fearfully wicked!"

"Perhaps that, too; but he is my last hope," she repeats, doggedly.

"Eve—Eve, for our mother's sake, because it would grieve her so!"

A spasmodic pass over the set, white face, but she does not offer to come back.

"And your child!"

"Oh, Heaven! my child!"

She is conquered now, and the healing tears fall again in showers, as she remembers, what for a time she has forgotten, the young life so closely knitted with her own. Her loss must be also his. In the far-off time, when he shall have become a man, what could compensate her for the agony of seeing him blush to own his mother. Nay, even if she should die she could leave no memory behind that he can cherish, only shame—awful, yet deserved, shame.

Weak as she has been, or only strong to do evil, womanhood is not dead within her, and the mother's love triumphs over all.

She will make one more appeal, and if that

falls she will face her husband's wrath fearlessly and proclaim her innocence to the very last. She is innocent, thank Heaven; and not the most malignant malice can rob her of that knowledge—the most precious heritage for her child.

"Barry, won't you help me for baby's sake!"

"Yes, I will do my best. Tell me, what it is you wish me to do!"

In her own mind Barry has pictured with sympathetic sensitiveness, and almost realised what Eve must be feeling now, the agony of knowing that she has forfeited her happiness by her own folly, and that there can be no hope in her husband's mercy.

Colonel Chester would have no pity for the woman who should dishonour his name.

Instinctively she feels that, and in a moment has taken her resolve.

Eve has all—she nothing to lose. She speaks very quietly, but it is a quietude more terrible than tears.

"Tell me what it is you wish me to do!"

Eleven o'clock, and simultaneously with the sound of its short, booming strokes the outside door opens, and Colonel Chester enters the house.

The two women, who are waiting with such burning impatience for his advent, longing, yet dreading, to get the ordeal over, exchange frightened glances one with another. The three hours have seemed like three days, so long and wearisome have they been; but now they are ended how gladly would both live them again rather than face the coming danger.

The reality seems even worse than what they had pictured to themselves it would be.

Eve's back falls into her lap, and she has not strength to lift it up; but Barry, whose nerves are more tightly strung, goes on working steadily.

Colonel Chester comes in slowly, and makes no attempt to hide his wrath—the worse that it has been so long pent.

A footstool that stands in his way is savagely kicked aside, and his expression is so fierce that his wife trembles.

"You are home early, Alex," she says, with an effort.

"Too early, I dare say! Permit me to present you with a piece of your own property. It seems a pity that such a valuable literary production should have passed from the author's hands!"

He speaks with terrible politeness, like the quiet that precedes a storm.

Eve quakes still more, and inwardly vows that should she have the good fortune to escape now that never again by such misdeeds will she put herself in his power.

Mechanically she takes it from his hand and reads it as though never seen before, but each word stings her with reproach, and stands out from the paper like a flame of fire—the shadow of that gleaming sword which the accusing angel held as he drove our first mother out from Paradise.

"Barry, is this yours?"

It seems as if she must give her sister this one chance to retreat from her promised self-sacrifice—as though she dare not accept it without—and yet her heart beats fast with fear as to the result. But Barry is not one to put her hand to the plough and then turn back; her word has been given and, right or wrong, she must be spoken now.

"Yes."

No more than the syllable of assent. Not for her life could she force more from her parched throat; but that is enough for the purpose, and as she takes the note and crumples it in her hand, Eve heaves a sigh of relief.

The danger is past and the burden—how heavy a one she does not know, not possessing that same fine sense of honour—thrown on her sister's shoulders.

"Is that all, Alex?"

He glares from one to the other, as a tiger might look that has been balked of his prey. Then a new idea strikes him.

"Not quite all. I should still like to know one thing—namely, how it was that your hand

and not your sister's was the one to transmit that—that valuable document to the ayah, who, by an unfortunate mistake, passed it on to me!"

But Eve has recovered herself now, and answers without hesitation.

"Barry gave it to me to give to her."

"A roundabout way to send a love-letter. Let me congratulate you, Miss Cardell, on its safe return to your hands, and at the same time counsel you to think twice before allowing it to reach its destination."

Barry accepts the taunt meekly, her head still bent over her sewing, and not venturing to defend herself lest her work be all undone. It would not have comforted her to know that it has only half succeeded in its object, that his doubts are not dispelled by her assertion, although compelled to accept it as the truth for want of contrary evidence.

Indeed a man with less keen insight might have discovered that all was not right.

Barry bears herself bravely, but her crimson face and shaking hands betray the fact that something else is troubling her beside the intercepted letter; and Eve is as white as a sheet.

All her better feelings are aroused by the cruelty of the implied aspersion on her sister for lack of maidenly reserve, and she springs to her feet indignantly. But the eager disclaimer dies away on her lips as she confronts the cold, scrutinising light in her husband's eye.

He draws the purdah aside, standing back to let her leave the room—and like a chidden child, powerless to dispute his will, she goes.

Then he turns again to Barry, an evil sneer still hovering on his lips.

"Good-night, Miss Cardell, we will not longer intrude on your doubtless pleasant thoughts."

The purdah falls, and she is left alone with her outraged modesty and pride.

CHAPTER XXV.

It seems a mockery when Barry awakes next morning that she finds so much the same. The faint watery beams of a sun that has struggled through the rain fall across the floor, and Eve's ayah stands before her smiling and respectful, apparently unconscious that she has given any cause for doubt or offence.

As Barry opens her eyes she salaams, and puts down a small tray on the table near her bed, on which, besides the inevitable tea and toast, the chota hari, which forms so important a part of an Anglo-Indian's day's routine, reposes an English letter.

It is from Mrs. Holmes, and as Barry peruses it with tearful eyes, contrasting that time with this, a wild wish comes into her mind that she had accepted the honest love which had been offered to her then, and so escape the evil days into which she has fallen. Yet the letter comforts her, telling her as it does of the kind thoughts with which she is remembered, and assuring her that a welcome is waiting for her whenever and how-ever she chooses to come.

"John has told me all," writes the mayor's kindly wife, "and I do not wonder at his choice. We did not know how dear you had grown to us all until we came to miss your cheerful presence. India is a terrible climate, so I hear, and am selfishly hoping that it may drive you back to us. Come when you will you shall find a home and parents as loving as though you had indeed been the daughter you refused to be. John is too sensible to grieve long for what is beyond his reach."

All this is consoling, all except that last sentence. No woman at any time likes to think that the loss of herself is not a lasting pain, and just now it would be doubly sweet to hear that someone would love her always, and believe in her whatever happened.

"Even he thought the worst of me once," she thinks the "he" in this case meaning the lover she has loved so dearly and proved false. "So there must be something in me inherently bad."

The only love it seems as if she could keep is

that of Spencer Blythe, and she scornfully deems it tribute to her worth that she has triumphed there.

When she goes down to breakfast she looks so white and woe-begone that Eve's heart aches for her, and yet she cannot help her. She can only listen with angry distaste to the cold and cutting sarcasms to which Colonel Chester gives vent at every possible opportunity.

When at last Berry leaves the room hastily, unable to bear more, she casts one glance of disdain at her husband, and follows.

She goes straight to her sister's room, and finds her near the window, looking with thoughtful eyes towards the snows that lie beyond. She turns, and smiles bravely as she meets Eve's compassionate gaze.

"Berry, how will you bear it?"

"Well enough. Better, perhaps, when I am more accustomed to it."

"You ought not to be subjected to such insulting scorn. It is monstrous."

"It is just. Believing what he does he could scarcely view me with much favour."

Berry had read the letter almost unconsciously while that terrible scene was being enacted, and it had been a bitter trial not to disclaim its ownership at once. Pure minded and undemonstrative almost to coldness, the words which to Eve had meant comparatively little, in her call up an agony of shame.

That passionate prayer for Ronald's return, and impulsive declaration that she cannot live without him, are ringing still in her ears; the very memory makes her face burn and she dared not retort, when Colonel Chester taunted her, lest he should quote from that letter and make her even more ashamed. Her accent of reproach, as she admits the justness of his scorn, touches Eve to the quick, and she hangs her head.

"Would you like to go away?" she asks, humbly.

"Where?"

"To Lucknow, and stay till we come. All this will be forgotten then."

"To stay with the Sowerbys, you mean?"

"If you like."

"I do not like. I hated it before."

"Then with the Hallers."

"Heaven forbid. A woman who never in her life used a diminutive, and has not forgotten the grammar she learnt at school!"

"Then what will you do?" helplessly.

"Remain where I am if you will have me. Why should I run away?"

She speaks lightly enough and apparently with no intent, but when Eve tries to combat her resolution she is firm. She has determined not to leave her sister, at any rate, until all shall once again be smooth and danger that has threatened is over for ever.

To her Ronald and Eve seem like two children, who, having played with fire, must henceforth be carefully watched. She does not hold them responsible for their deeds, having somewhat contemptuously decided that they are too weak to be really wicked.

It comforts her to think that it is only Eve's foolishness which has led her to err, and that that, too, may perhaps account for the writing of that dreadful letter.

They stay in all that day, nor does Colonel Chester leave the bungalow except to pace the verandah restlessly, always in sight of the windows, so the sisters are not again left alone.

He is in the drawing-room ostensibly perusing the latest Pioneer when the bearer brings in a card on a salver. Eve grasps it nervously and the colour mounts into her face as she reads.

"The door is shut," she falters, making use of the less courteous but more truthful phrase that in India takes the place of our English "not at home."

"May I see?" asks Colonel Chester, stretching out his hand.

"Certainly! Why not?"

But she did not offer to give it him, merely laying it on the table, and resuming the whispered conversation she has been holding with the baby on her knee.

Colonel Chester mutters an ejaculation that

sounds like a sweeping condemnation of women in general, as he rises and goes for it himself.

"Why was he not admitted?" he asks, angrily.

"Really I did not know you wished to see him, and I dislike receiving visitors when the room is made into a nursery," answers Eve, coldly, glancing at an unoffending rattle lying on the floor, the only object which gives colour to her remark.

"Pshaw!"

But his incredulity is of little account now, Ronald May having by this time gone too far to be overtaken, and for the present Eve has escaped the ordeal it would have been to have spoken to him under her husband's eyes.

He is as vexed as she is relieved.

"On this occasion you might have made an exception. The young man's eligibility should have pleaded for him," he goes on disagreeably, "not to mention your sister's confessed partiality. I am afraid you are making only a sorry *chaperone*."

The flash he encounters from Berry's angry eyes only spurs him on to fresh indulgence of his malice, but he bends his head with gentlest courtesy as he delivers his next sting.

"Forgive me if, having surprised your secret, I am perhaps indelicately anxious to forward your interests. Having tasted the delights of matrimony I naturally wish that others should be as fortunate—like the fabled fox who, having lost his brush, persuaded the jeering vulpine crew that his was the happier condition!"

"I do not follow you quite!" says Eve, surveying him with unmixed disfavour.

"Perhaps my simile was not a happy one! At least, I have ample compensation for the lack of freedom in possessing you—a valuable possession I hope not soon to lose!"

"Lose!" echoes his wife, faintly.

He shrugs his shoulders.

"There is always a certain risk in possessing valuables of any sort, and an old man who has married a young wife can hardly be too careful of his prize, even when he has perfect confidence in her loyalty and truth!"

Then, with smiling eyes, but a sinister expression round his mouth, which, could they have seen, would have told them much, Colonel Chester bows pleasantly and leaves the room.

"I shall end by hating him," whispered Berry, in a smothered voice.

"I began by that; it was my error and misfortune both."

In her dread lest Eve should say more and afterwards repent, Berry rallies, and quickly changes the subject.

They go to a ball that night—a ball given by the bachelors in the station—and as they enter the room, both leaning on Colonel Chester's arms, few would guess that the handsome trio represents so disunited a home.

Colonel Chester is always suave and companionable, besides possessing a face and figure that would at any place attract admiring notice. His wife is the beauty of the season, and is the more in request that she so seldom appears in public; while Berry, though having no real claims to beauty, is sufficiently quaint and bright to win for herself the most flattering comments, and as many claimants for her hand as she can conveniently satisfy.

It is while she is dancing with Mr. Blythe that a faint buzz of excitement passes from one end of the room to the other, and, looking up, she faces the cause of it.

A woman of about thirty or thirty-five years of age, possessing something of the noble beauty of a typical queen and the stature of an ancient goddess, such as Praxiteles painted or Phidias with his marvellous art has carved in stone.

Her long, velvet robes, sable in hue, but chastened with draperies of soft, old lace, fall in simple folds to her feet; her hair requires no ornament, and would look as well without the diamond stars that are quivering in it. Were it not for its silvery shade, she would look many years younger, but perhaps not quite so beautiful as now.

It grows so softly on her forehead, and contrasts

so strikingly with the dark eyebrows and violet eyes.

"Her face was like a damsel's face,
And yet her hair was grey."

She moves listlessly among the crowd, a cavalier on either side, glancing from right to left, noticing no one in particular, only bowing with almost royal condescension to the few with whom she is personally acquainted.

"Who is she?" asks Berry, struck by her appearance, and feeling a strange presentiment that in some manner this woman will influence their lives.

Mr. Blythe shrugs his shoulders.

"That is a thing no one can answer with any truth. The best that is known of her is that she is very rich, very charitable, and frequents most galleys that are going on; the worst, that she is eccentric and unhappy, and that every now and then she disappears, and is almost forgotten before she turns up again! They say she goes abroad to visit her husband's grave!"

"Then she is a widow?"

"I cannot say. It is all conjecture."

"She is very handsome!"

"About that there is no doubt. I think she grows handsomer every year. Shouldn't wonder if, in her old age, she does not become a professional beauty."

"She is like a beautiful, baleful poison," continues Berry thoughtfully, not heeding his remark.

Just then the stranger passes Colonel Chester, and her trailing skirts sweep over Eve's white gown, like a cloud across the snow. She turns with a few words of graceful apology; but even as she speaks the colour rushes into her face and as quickly recedes. She would have fallen had she not been leaning on her partner's arm. It proves, however, only a passing weakness; the next moment she is again erect, and moves away with her usual stately step.

When she leaves the room her retreat is so well covered by her expression of bored distaste that none can guess she is fleeing before a memory and a reproach, trying to escape from the pain that has come to life, at the sight of a face she had deemed dead to her for ever.

Colonel Chester is as grey as death; more discomposed by this chance encounter than would have been thought possible by anyone acquainted with his usual impassive calm.

He has raised his hand as though to ward the woman off, but it drops now powerless to his side, and he draws his wife quickly away, as though unwilling she should breathe the same air, or pass over the same spot so lately trodden by that other.

Not until she has left the room does he recover his self-possession, and then he passes his handkerchief quickly over his forehead to wipe away the big beads of moisture that have started out. His grey eyes, as they peer suspiciously from beneath his knitted brows, have the look of a hunted animal that, wounded as it is, had strength to reach its den, only to find it destroyed and the last chance gone.

If Berry bears any malice she may gratify it now, for he is suffering as keenly as even she could wish. But there is no such thought in her mind—no wish for revenge, knowing that any blow which falls on him must also strike his wife.

Eve is happily unconscious of all that has happened beyond the stranger's brushing past her and speaking in excuse.

She looks after her admiringly as she leaves, but feels no curiosity about her, and attributes her sudden change of colour to the heat and crowded room.

Not for a few minutes does she look into her husband's face, and then she is startled by its terrible, even ghostly pallor.

His hand is pressed to his side, and he has bitten his lips so sharply to prevent a cry that a thin streak of blood is slowly coursing down his cheek.

"Are you ill, Alex?" she asks, forgetting all feud in her distress at seeing him thus.

"A little; I shall be better presently. It was a spasm at my heart!"

"It must have been terribly bad!" anxiously. "It was!"

And with this curt assent he dismisses her sympathy and the subject of his illness at once and the same time, entering into conversation with Mr. Le Sage, who happens to be beside him.

Eve is effectually silenced, and questions him no more.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the room, Mr. Blythe is remarking to Berry,—

"I don't know whether you will agree with me or no, but it has just struck me that it is very queer to meet two people of the same name in so small a circle. In fact, I consider it quite a coincidence that the two most beautiful women in the room both should be called Mrs. Chester!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHEN Eve reaches home that night her child's ayah meets her on the verandah.

"Baba very sick, plenty fever, no drink, no eat!" she exclaims, in terrified distress.

"Where is he! Have you left him alone?" gasps Eve, excitedly, and then, without waiting for a reply, rushes on into her room.

The child is lying in his cot, pale and languid, with half-closed eyes and open mouth, and as the mother lays her hand upon his wrist, she feels the tiny pulse is beating rapidly as though it would tear the delicate skin with its violent throbs.

She sinks on her knees by the bed and calls him by his name, but not even a flicker of the eyelid shows that he has heard or recognised her voice.

"Sh—sh! mem—sahib! Baba sleep." "Sleeping with those open eyes staring vacantly before him!"

Oh, Heavens! surely a sleep like that means death. What can she do to save him! She turns round helplessly and encounters her own ayah watching her with a wicked expression of satisfaction on her face, which she changes at once for one of mock sympathy and distress.

"Leave the room, instantly," commands Eve, wrathfully.

The woman affects to misunderstand, only moving a little farther away.

"Go. If mem-sahib wants you she will call," adds Berry, and this time she thinks it wiser to obey.

Then Berry turns to Eve.

"Be comforted, dear, he cannot be so very ill in so short a time, and the doctor will be here directly; I have sent for him. It must be a good sign that he is asleep."

"Oh! not like that, Berry. If he would only awake and notice me."

But the next moment she wishes her prayer unaided. The big blue eyes open wide and the white lips are pressed together in terrible pain, as one convulsion after another seizes the small frame, each more violent than the last. Suddenly they cease, and once again the hands unclench, and the child relapses into its unnatural slumber.

Eve had sunk on the floor sobbing, her hands before her eyes, not strong enough to bear the sight of suffering she cannot assuage. Berry, more helpful, is placing cool bandages on his head, and ordering the servants to prepare hot water in anticipation of what the doctor may require. He is not long in obeying the summons sent, but he looks very grave as he stands by the child's bed and notes the rapidly waning strength.

"Will he die?" asks Eve, in an agonised whisper.

"My dear madam, I cannot say. The issue is in Heaven's hands. We can only do our best."

He speaks very gently and with evident compassion for the lovely woman so prostrate in her grief; but his directions are given to Berry, having recognised her at once as the stronger nature of the two.

"I have done all that is possible," he says to her when he leaves an hour later. "I do not think you need fear a return of the convulsion now. The fever is the chief danger. If that

abates within the next few hours he may recover yet. You will do as I have told you."

When he is gone the two women settle themselves to watch through the night. Berry has taken off her ball-dress, and having put on a dressing-robe instead, has taken the child into her arms, where she can feel the temperature of his body and judge how he is progressing without disturbing him by such frequent touches. His little dry hands lie listlessly between her soft cool fingers. She would give worlds to feel them growing moist. How would Eve take his loss! Not in resignation she is sure.

Her husband's conduct lately has so alienated her affection that the only safeguard she possesses is her babe. For his sake she had promised to bear all patiently, but what if this motive be removed! She would not while he lived do aught to cause him shame, but if he died—

Silent, and almost wordless, is the prayer she breathes to Heaven for his recovery; but perhaps it is not less efficacious than louder vociferations.

Eve, too, acknowledges all the importance of his life at the same time as she realises what she would lose by his death. It is an even stronger tie than the mother-love felt by a happy wife, who has no other pain—no guilt to expiate and avoid. A fear, too, has come into her brain that it is in judgment this trial has been given. She is afraid to pray. She deserves no mercy; why should she ask it!

She can only sit and watch, the tears rolling down her cheeks, and her hands, tightly clasped, lying in her lap.

The lamplight flickers on the sheen of her silken gown, and on the golden hair which falls in showers to her knees.

In taking off her wreath it had tumbled about her thus, and she had not yet troubled to gather it again into a knot.

She looks like Gilda's Magdalene, only even more womanly and fair.

Once her husband enters, and as he passes his arm around her in an effort to console, an irresistible impulse comes over him to press a lingering caress upon her lips.

The estrangement has been so trying, and his bitterness has hurt himself almost as much as her. He stoops and kisses her once, twice upon the mouth.

She does not shrink from him, but her indifference is as galling as a more pointed rebuff. It is her child who engages all her attention—all her thought; and when she pushes him aside with unconscious vehemence, the opportunity for reconciliation slips by.

The grey dawn is creeping through the window when at last Berry utters a joyful cry.

"I would not speak until I was quite sure, but baby's hand has been getting cooler and moister for the last half-hour. I think we have good hopes now!"

The doctor when he comes confirms her opinion.

"The danger is past," he says; "it all depends now upon your care in guarding against a relapse."

The relief is so great that Eve is overcome, and can only weep her thankfulness on her sister's breast, but by-and-by she changes her gown for a more suitable one, and becomes an assistance to Berry, instead of an added anxiety. At first she has been nearly paralysed, like all very weak and loving natures, proving unable to bear the shock of so sudden and keen a grief. Now she rallies and is of real use.

They nurse him carefully all that day, and in the evening, when Eve has him on her knee, and is gazing at him with a rapturous devotion that asks for nothing more, Berry steals away for a little rest.

Colonel Chester looks up as she comes into the room where he is sitting. With all his faults he honestly loves his child.

"Well!" he adds, anxiously.

"It is well, the boy is progressing wonderfully now."

"Thanks to your care!"

"And Eve's."

But Colonel Chester does not reply. He has been softened by the trouble and fear they have

shared; but now all danger is over, he only remembers how his advances have been repelled. It angers him to think that having humbled his pride by making the first step towards reconciliation it should not have been eagerly accepted. His wife shows so plainly that she neither desires his love nor dreads his hate. What might have proved a link to knit them closer together has only been the means of further sundering them.

"I should scarcely fancy nursing was Eve's métier," he observes, presently, with sarcastic emphasis.

Declining to discuss with him his wife's failings, Berry takes up some cards that are lying there.

"Have all these been to-day?" she asks, reading out their names.

"All—and more!"

"I wonder how they heard baby was ill!"

"Perhaps the doctor told them; news so soon spreads. By-the-by, one gentleman was very particular in his inquiries. I met him in the Parace shop. It was Ronald May."

Berry makes no comment and Colonel Chester continues,—

"The strangest thing was that these inquiries were not for you, but my wife."

"That is very likely," laughs Berry gaily, having cast off her card for a time in her relief at knowing that the child is better, and Eve, for the present, safe. "He would not wear his heart on his sleeve, and you are too unsympathetic to make a good confidant."

He glances at her keenly, and for the first time wonders whether he has done right in doubting her word before. Suppose, after all, the young fellow's attentions to Eve have been really only a blind to cover his courtship to Berry; in that case how he has wronged them both by his unworthy suspicions.

Idly he takes up a book of old plays that has been lent him by Captain Burdett, and as though in answer to his thoughts, he lights upon this passage:—

"No, faith, I dare trust thee. I do suspect thou art honest, for it is so rare a thing to be honest amongst you that some one man in an age may perhaps suspect some two women to be honest, but never believe it verily!"

(To be continued.)

A WIND OF FATE.

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(Continued from page 368.)

"Let us walk down to the beach," I suggested. "Fred wanted to have a row; perhaps he and Grace have gone. I had such a headache that I had to lie down."

The doctor looked keenly into my face as I spoke, and of course I blushed slightly. I was not in the least troubled about Fred. He might go rowing with all the young women in Christendom—I did not feel afraid.

We talked about other things until we reached the stone steps that led down to where the boats were fastened. They belonged to the doctor, and this was his land we were on.

As we walked along he looked rather abstracted. I wondered whether he liked the idea of Grace's going out with Fred alone. I felt like reassuring him; but I did not dare.

We stood at the top of the terrace, surrounded by old trees, one of which overhung the balustrade, almost brushing my hat with its leaves. We looked out across the sea.

Just a little distance above the land jutted out into a point, on which the lighthouse stood. Inside this sheltered spot the water was perfectly calm near the shore, but, farther out, a sudden gale had ruffled the waves into rough, white-capped, angry surges. The sky was benked up with heavy grey clouds that threatened a storm. It hardly seemed safe to be away from shore in a rowboat.

Tossed on the highest billows, almost out of sight, was a tiny speck. Could it be their boat? Looking down, we saw that one was missing—a

mere cockleshell. I glanced at the doctor. His face was grave, even anxious.

"You are alarmed!" But he was looking eagerly out at the troubled waters beyond the point.

"I am going to take one of those stronger boats and go after them," he said abruptly.

"Is there danger?" I went on, anxiously.

"A little," was the reply, "in that frail boat. I cannot imagine what possessed Mr. Lingard to take it."

My heart sank within me. I hadn't much confidence in Fred's skill.

"But you will be risking three lives instead of two," I continued, hurriedly.

He smiled.

"No, I can manage a boat better than Mr. Lingard, and I shall take one that is stronger." As he spoke he sprang down the steps into the skiff, and, in a moment, was pulling with long, steady strokes, out towards the other boat.

The waves beat against the little craft, but he seemed to control it perfectly. The keen wind still blew, but I felt as if I should suffocate. I unfastened my jacket at the throat and pushed it back. As I leaned eagerly forward I pressed my hand against my heart to stop its violent beating.

Now he has reached the little boat. I shut my eyes. When I opened them I uttered an exclamation. "Thank Heaven!"—they were safe in the larger one. As they came nearer I could see that Fred was exhausted by his struggles with the elements. The doctor was rowing with all his might and main. Would his strength fail before he reached the shore? Would the winds and waves overwhelm them?

Nearer and nearer they were coming. I almost held my breath. There, close to the shore—they had reached it!—in an instant the doctor had sprung out—then my heart gave one gasp of relief—then I lost consciousness.

When I opened my eyes I was lying on the bed in my darkened room, mamma sitting by me, holding my hand. Gradually memory and thought returned to me.

"Are they all safe?" I gasped.

"Yes, yes—all safe," was mamma's assurance, as she bent solicitously over me.

Then I sank back on my pillows, and closed my eyes for a moment. As my mind grew clearer I realised what that short hour of peril had showed me in all its terrible vividness—what, but for that test of danger, I might never have known. But could the knowledge bring me anything but misery?

"Would you like to see Fred?" mamma was asking me.

"No," I answered, wearily; "I don't want to see anybody—I feel too tired."

Somewhat I shrank from facing them all again. What had I said or done in that time of danger? Anything to reveal my secret—the secret that I had never guessed before!

"Nobody was hurt, thank Heaven!" mamma was saying; "not even the good doctor."

"Nobody?"

I closed my eyes, and turned my face to the wall.

Mamma left me, hoping I would sleep; but I felt in no mood for that. Yet, sooner or later, I must dress and go downstairs. How I longed to put it off—to postpone meeting them all; but what was the use?

So I rose, dressed, and presented myself at the tea-table, looking a little ghost-like. Fred seemed glad to see me, though he only took my hand and pressed it. He was a trifle pale, but he looked very bright.

After some conversation on different subjects, mamma turned to me, and said,—

"You won't be able to go the day after to-morrow, will you?"

"Indeed I shall," I answered, quickly. "I should like to get away from this place as soon as possible!"

I felt that my tone was almost peevish. Mamma looked at me sympathisingly, as if she could guess why I was so anxious to leave.

I was sitting in the porch, in the soft September sunshine, the next morning. Fred had gone to the post-office. I had a book in my lap, but I was not looking at it. I did not try to

read. My thoughts wandered back over the past summer, a strange mingling of bitter and sweet.

Hearing my name spoken in a familiar voice, I looked up and saw the doctor smiling down at me in his usual way. He shook my hand.

"Grace sent me to bring you over," he said. "Put on your shawl and come."

Slowly, unwillingly, I obeyed, and we walked leisurely along the cliffs.

"So you are going away to-morrow?" he said, after awhile.

"Yes," I answered, languidly.

As I saw the calm, smiling sea I shivered a little, thinking of the harm it might do. We were some distance from the boat-landing, and I felt that it was incumbent on me to speak of his bravery yesterday, but I did not want to.

At last I forced myself to say, not without an effort,—

"You were very brave yesterday."

He smiled and answered,—

"Oh! it was nothing! I would have done much more for you, had it been necessary."

He said it quite as a matter of course.

"For me?" I ejaculated. "I don't understand!"

"Have you no interest in Mr. Lingard—no special interest?" he asked, slowly, looking straight at me.

"Oh, yes—we are old friends," I answered.

"Nothing more!" he persisted, very gently.

I felt myself growing angry. My eyes fell, and the hot colour crept into my cheeks.

At last I broke the silence and said, softly,—

"You had someone in the boat in whom you were interested, too."

"You mean—Grace?"

I did not look at him as I answered. "Yes."

"You are right," he went on, gravely. "I am very fond of Grace, and she is very fond of me."

"I am very glad," I answered, wearily. "You deserve each other, and I am sure you ought to be happy."

"Yes, we ought to be, unless we wanted something else that we could not get."

"People want a great many things that they can't always have," I said, rather sharply. "They may as well make up their minds to do without them."

"That is true," he assented, gravely.

I began to think either his brain or mine must be softening.

"I suppose you did not care about my fate in those moments of suspense?" he asked, abruptly.

I felt his earnest gaze, but I did not dare face it.

"Certainly I cared," trying to make my voice sound unconcerned. "We are friends!"

"Surely! Even Fred could not object to that!"

"Nor Grace!" I could not resist saying, though I knew my voice was unsteady.

"Nor Grace!" he echoed. "But if they did care!" he added.

I looked at him in speechless astonishment.

Just at that moment we rounded a curve in the shore, a sheltered sequestered spot, and saw two figures standing close together—Fred and Grace. He was holding her hand and looking down into her eyes as only a lover can look.

I stood perfectly still in silent amazement.

"I don't think they would care very much," whispered the doctor. "It looks to me as if we had been jilted."

"I am so glad," escaped my lips, just audibly.

"Does that mean that you don't care for Fred, and do care for me?" he half-whispered.

I did not answer, but he knew what I meant just the same.

"It was that hour of danger that told us all the truth," the doctor explained to me later.

"When I reached the little boat I found Grace clinging to Fred as she never clung to me—and, when I reached the shore, you just stretched out your hands to me and spoke my name. Then we all knew."

"Blessed gale!" I answered, looking into his happy eyes. "Our lives might have all been wrecked had it not been for that fortunate WIND OF FATE!"

As I said this, I felt a sudden pang of jealousy.

"What a strange feeling!" I murmured, looking down.

"It is a very common feeling," he said, looking at me.

"But I don't understand it," I said, looking up.

"You will understand it when you are married," he said, looking at me.

"I don't want to be married," I said, looking down.

"You will be married," he said, looking at me.

"I don't want to be married," I said, looking down.

WHAT LIES BEYOND?

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CHAPTER XXII.

TWELVE o'clock, and up through the gloom and darkness of the night there sounded the cautious tread of a little band of men, as they drew nearer and nearer to Sea View, until they stood within its very portal, silent figures.

Then their leader tried the door. It gave way under his touch, and swung back.

Preceding his men, one by one they followed him into the dimly-lighted hall, until four had entered.

Looking around as though in search of something which had been described to him, his eye fell upon a curtain opposite, falling before an alcove in the hall, and fitted up as a little study.

Here they all concealed themselves. In five minutes, all was as it had been before.

Within the house there was silence fully three-quarters of an hour. Then a light sent one flickering ray across the semi-gloom, and a girl appeared at the head of the stairs, carrying a lighted candle in her hand.

The lieutenant, peering from his concealment, drew a long breath. Surely there was some mistake. This was not she, who, in all probability, another half-hour would see his prisoner.

She wore a close clinging dress of black, rendering almost startling the ashen pallor of her face, from which the hair was swept back, and loosely gathered in a great coil low on her neck.

Her eyes seemed of lustrous blackness, shining into the gloom, and unfathomable misery was stamped upon the brow and drawn about the red, curved lips.

There she stood a full minute, all unconscious of the scrutinizing gaze to which she was subjected. Then, step by step, she descended the stairs. Her footfall made no sound upon the heavy carpet; her dress gave forth no rustle. She seemed scarcely human, seen in the candle's flickering light.

Another instant she paused on the library's threshold; then, as though having gathered courage, she resolutely turned the knob of the door and entered.

Miss Mayhew was sitting before the fire, with an expression of great weariness.

"I was on the eve of falling asleep," she whispered. "This is the next medicine," indicating a bottle. "Now, may I go?"

Mona bowed her head in assent, and Kate passed from the room.

The girl, left alone, moved her lips as if in prayer, but no sound came. She waited full twenty minutes; then she stooped and took from beneath some hangings, where she had secreted it, both food and wine.

This done, she knocked twice very gently on the panel. Her task must be finished, and at once.

Almost instantly the panel swung back, and Rob Foster's ugly face and form appeared to view; but at the ghastly look on the former his daughter started.

"Father, are you ill?" she exclaimed.

"Ill, girl? It seems to me a year since I was shut up in that accursed hole, and the pain in my leg gnawing like a wolf at the bone. Sometimes I think it's done for me after all, and it ain't no use to try to save myself. But I'd rather die than give myself up—curse 'em!"

And then followed a volley of oaths as the wound in his leg caused him to writhe in suffering.

"Hush, father—hush! One sound may bring about Mr. French's death. It is for this reason only one person is allowed in the sick-room at a time."

"Aye, he can lie there pampered and nursed, while I am left to die like a dog! Let me get to him. I'll end the question—I'll put him out of his misery."

He blazed the words in savage glee, and made a step toward the bed. Like a young lioness, Mona sprang before him.

"You dare defy me?" he said, and he seized her arm in his rough, brutal grasp.

"I dare defy you," she said, looking up.

"You shall not," he said, looking at her.

"You shall not," she said, looking up.

"You shall not," he said, looking at her.

With the hand left free, she pointed to the music-room.

"Another step and I will call!" she whispered. "Besides, every moment is precious. Here is food—eat it."

"Aye, what do you care though your poor father be starving! What is it to you!"

But as he spoke he relaxed his hold, and with a sudden air fell to work on his supper.

"Where's the box?" he said, when he had finished. "Come—I've no time to lose. Did you get it?"

"Yes; it is here."

She drew it forth from the folds of her dress. At sight of it his eyes glittered and his face worked. He reached out his hand to clutch it, when the door leading into the hall flew open, a guard of four men defending it. One, in the uniform of a lieutenant, stepped forward, and in low tones, that the sick man might not be disturbed, pronounced the order for Rob Foster's arrest. Simultaneously, Alton Ayre's form appeared upon the threshold of the music-room, with the dazed look of one just awaking from a heavy slumber. No one saw or noted the blonde head peering over the shoulders of the soldiers in the hall.

It was a striking tableau. The light shone full on Mona's exquisite beauty and the coarse, brutal features of the smuggler, while in the background was the bed, and Bernard Ffrench's white face and closed eyes upon its pillows. An instant, and each man could hear his own heart beat—an instant, during which Rob Foster measured his ground. The lamp, with its dim, mellow light, stood at his elbow. Taking it in his hand, he hurried it toward the guard. It fell crashing to the floor, with the noise that must arouse the household. The lieutenant sprang forward to seize him, but Mona, with instinctive loyalty, threw herself before him.

"A light!" he cried.

In half a minute his command had been obeyed; but the place where Rob had stood was empty—he had fled. How and where? Not by door or window—this they knew; yet he had gone, escaped them. And now all the inmates of the startled household came pouring into the room. What did it mean? It meant that Mona, under her friend's roof, had admitted her father—that she had been caught in the very act of conveying to him some secret wares—that she had made her nursing a pretext to gain audience with him.

In her hand she still held the fatal box; she had even forgotten it. Her eyes were fixed upon the panel in the wall, whose secret she alone knew; her colourless lips were tightly sealed, lest the cry of despair which was rending her heart should escape them.

She saw nothing, heard nothing, when a touch upon her arm aroused her. It was the young lieutenant.

"You are my prisoner, Miss Foster!" he said, though with a glance of compassion at the pale, beautiful face.

Unresistingly she permitted him to take the box she held from her hands. It could do her father no further good. What mattered it! But Claire sprang forward to her side, crying,—

"Mona, your prisoner! What can you mean? What has she done!"

"It means that Miss Foster has been suspected of aiding and abetting the smugglers. We have now discovered her in the act. This box, doubtless, contains stolen goods. It must be examined by the court," answered the lieutenant.

"You had better examine it yourself, Claire!" sneered Miss Maynew, unable to restrain her malice. "Miss Foster once resented very bitterly my accusation that she might be thieving. Her mock indignation would hardly serve her here!"

A bright sunset spot flamed on Mona's cheek at the cruel speech.

One voice as yet was silent. She raised her eyes then to meet Alton Ayre's bent upon her. He strode into the centre of the room.

"Do you forget," he said, "that whatever the man's crime, he is this girl's father, and that she is bound to obey his behests? What has she done! She has not admitted him. By whatever way he escaped, by that way he entered. Doubtless it is the long-forgotten secret passage to the rocks."

But even as he solved the enigma, he remembered Mona's words of long ago, when he had questioned her on that first evening as to whom she had been with.

"Perhaps one of the Raymond ghosts," she had answered.

Could it be that this secret entrance had been known to her then—that her terror of the ghosts had been feigned! Like an ugly cloud the doubt crept around him.

No, no, it could not be! But she, watching his face, read the sudden question in his eyes, and a look of new pain crept into her own, as she turned to the lieutenant of the guard.

"Take me," she said, "as soon as may be. I am your prisoner; only take me away from here!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

MONA had not realised whither they were bringing her, until she looked about a narrow cell with its grated windows. She, who all her life had roamed at will, with the ocean telling its story at her feet, and the blue, limitless sky above her head, was now hemmed in by four bare, white walls.

Utterly exhausted in body and soul, she threw herself on the hard pallet provided for her, and slept the dreamless sleep which wearied nature demanded.

When she opened her eyes, she was in utter darkness. It was night. A sense of awful loneliness weighed on her. Gasping sobs broke the silence of her cell. Her eyes, burning and tearless, strove to pierce the blackness. The air was hot and stifling to her. She could understand now the madness which led men to make an end of their own miserable lives.

In this hour, every act of her own past passed before her like a panoramic scene. First there came to her a strange vision. She saw herself a little, prattling child, whose nightly slumbers were inspired by sweetest music, sung in low, gentle tones, as the singer bent over her little bed. The face of the songster framed itself in the night. How beautiful, how pure, it was! She stretched out to its longing arms. The word "Mother" passed her lips, and the vision smiled in answer—such a sweet, seraphic smile that in its light the darkness vanished.

Then the face was gone, and in its stead were the broad waste of the waters, lighted up by a burning ship, and far, far off, away from any human help, the little child's sunny head sinking down beneath the waves, which choked its cry for help.

Then like the echo of a forgotten story, there came the memory of Claire's words of the poor lady whose little child was drowned at sea.

Again the sweet, wistful face haunted her, and now it bore strange likeness to that other face which had rung the child to sleep.

Then she reverted to her own infancy, with the roar of the sea her only lullaby. Little love or tenderness could she recall from Rob Foster and his wife. Often the latter had shielded her from the former's harshness.

This was all. Where then had come these dreams of mother-love, of mother-tenderness! Why did the pale, and face of that suffering mother bring with it a ray of comfort to her own poor tortured heart!

In the wonderment the vision passed, but the night had also passed. The pale light of the dawn glimmered through and dissipated the dark shadows. She heard as though far off, the low twitter of a bird to its mate. She strove to raise her head from its pillow. She could not. Within her reach she saw a pitcher, filled with water, but had no strength to stretch out longing hands and raise it to her fevered lips.

With the growing light came the full horror, the terrible disgrace which had wrapped her in its mantle, and which had brought that look of doubt even into Alton Ayre's face. Even he had turned away from her. She had no friend in the wide world.

No friend! Like an inspiration there came to her the memory of another man who had loved her and who had asked what he might do to win

her answering love. Paul Millar. Ah, he would know the truth! He would not turn from her in loathing.

Then came remembrance of her father's prophesy. Did he not say that the day would come when she would implore Paul to become his wife, and he would spurn her prayer!

Nay, nay! Not his wife—never! If impossible in that time which seemed so far off, the more impossible now, when she could no longer look in his eyes, and answer him truthfully that no man separated them.

Then her thought wandered to Sea View. She wondered if this pale, morning light was falling full on Bernard Ffrench's dead face, or if he would open his eyes to Claire's glance. Would he return Claire's love in time, and, when they both were happy, would they ever remember her wretched fate!

Oh, for sight of one friendly face! Oh, to hear one friendly tone!

She wondered what could be this dull weight pressing on her heart and brain, this fierce longing for cool drink, this burning throat, and these parched lips. She had never been ill an hour in her life.

Oh, she could understand now the frenzy with which her father had carried the pitcher to his lips, and drained it.

She found herself, too, murmuring strange, incoherent words; then she ceased to wonder, and knew no more, not even when they bore her from the cell to the hospital, and watched long days, and nights, and weeks, beside her couch.

It seemed a continuance of her delirium, when she opened her eyes, only to see surrounding her strange and pitying faces. She closed them, shudderingly.

For whose face here had she hoped?

The day of the trial was drawing very near, they told her; but what mattered it to her? Even if her innocence were established, her life was steeped in disgrace.

But into the darkness crept a sudden ray of light, a roseate flash across the blackness of her despair, as one evening, in the twilight, her nurse said to her:

"Some one has been asking for you, Miss Foster. You may see him now, if you will."

Someone asking for her! Who could it be but one! He had come, then! He had not hated and despised her. He would assure her of his belief in her innocence.

She could go back to her cell, then, content—aye, for her future life. That memory would leaven all its bitterness.

Yes, she would see him, she said faintly; then waited with wildly-beating heart and throbbing pulses for the first sight of his dear face.

The door opened; on its threshold stood a tall and stalwart form.

For an instant she failed to recognise it; then the door closed behind him, and, with a sob of bitter disappointment, which happily he could not thus interpret, she stretched out one white, wasted hand to welcome Paul Millar.

"Oh, Mona!" he cried, falling on his knees by her side! "why did I go away? I might have saved you so much! I could not believe it when they told me the truth of all that had happened—how you have suffered!"

His voice choked as he spoke.

"Yes, I have suffered," she answered wearily; "but it matters nothing. Tell me of my father. Has he escaped?"

Paul's face grew grave, as he replied:

"He is beyond the reach of human law."

"You mean—"

"That he is dead! I knew the secret entrance to the cave, though I did not dream that it led up to Sea View. However, after a week the guard relaxed their vigilance, and I went in, in search of your father. I found him in a dying condition, perishing from want of food and his unattended wound. I did what I could. I made his last moments easy. Then I left him there. I thought he would have wished it so, even as he would have wished his enemies should never gloat over his dead face. In his dying moments, Mona, he spoke of you. 'The box!' he gasped—the diamonds! The miniature and the papers will explain. I meant—She is—"

Then he fell back and expired. I could glean no more, nor could I find the box of which he spoke."

"It is well!" she answered, wearily. "Doubtless it was some new disgrace. Poor father! But the box—I remember now! It is in the hands of the police. Oh, Paul, what new misery has Fate in store for me?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

A PALE hung over Sea View which scarcely lifted even when, after that awful night, Death, weary of his long vigil, removed the shadow of his dread presence, and Bernard French's youth and strength gained for life the victory.

He thought that he was dreaming, when he opened his weary eyes, and met Claire's wistful, loving glance. Her face had been the last he had seen on the night he had been betrayed; her clinging hold had driven to keep him back from danger, even as now her hand still ministered to his needs, and the sweet, young face was the first on which his conscious glance rested; but for a moment only, ere it wandered off in search of some one for whom he looked in vain.

"Mons! where is she?" he questioned, very feebly.

The words smote Claire's ear with jealous pain, but she must hide from him the truth. Any excitement might be fatal to him.

"You must not talk," she commanded, very gently, "Mons is not with us at present; but you must ask no questions now, if you want to grow strong and well again. Besides, I am your nurse, and am responsible for you. There I don't try to think," as she saw the weary expression in the effort, "Will you not take my assurance that all is well, and not disturb yourself?"

Too weak to resist her, he spoke no more, but with every hour's renewed strength Memory resumed her sceptre, and little by little the events of that night were made clear to him. As though it had been a portion of his delirium, there floated before him another vision of the girl he loved, clasped in the arms of the man who had betrayed him.

Yes, Claire had spoken truly. He must nurse all his little strength until he could confront the double traitor. He could understand Alton Ayre's motive, too, by this clearer light. Alton had drunk in all his insanely proffered confidence, only to make of it this most foul abuse. Neither could he be surprised that Mona had learned to hate him so deeply that she refused to let the same roof harbour them both, even while he lay sick, and helpless to do her further wrong. But what a debt of gratitude he owed his little nurse, who stole about his room with a soft footfall and a gentle touch! Her very movements soothed him; her voice never jarred. Once, Miss Mayhew had entered his sick chamber, and all day after he had been feverish and restless, so that her future presence had been forbidden.

This was to Kate no matter of regret. Alton Ayre shared her banishment, and she must make good use of these precious fleeting hours. Hardly had doubt of Mona been born on that night, than his love for her reasserted itself. Calling the Lieutenant aside, he had offered any bail for her release; on finding the young officer powerless to accept his offer, he had pleaded that he might be permitted to accompany her, but this, too, had been refused. But one thing remained, and that was to gain the ear of the court. At least she could have evidence of his loving care for her.

He wrote her:

"MY DARLING,—

"Mad with excitement and despair, for one short, fleeting moment the doubt came to me that you might have known of the existence of the secret passage. I had just been roused from sleep, and remembered the words you had spoken, on the night that you stole out to meet Bernard French. Some one had told me, too, that you were his affianced wife. This I know to be false, but write me just one little line, my own, giving me the right to acknowledge you my

betrothed before the world! It was mine such a little while ere you took it from me. I long to come to you, to comfort you. May I come, darling! Can you so far forgive me as to make me welcome! Answer me but by a word, a single word. I wait it with anxious hoping.— Faithfully yours, "ALTON."

His heart felt lighter when he had deposited this in the letter bag, but lighter still were Miss Mayhew's footsteps as, an hour prior to the departure of the post, she carefully sorted its contents, putting in her breast the letter whose answer Alton Ayre would wait in vain.

In her own room, she broke open the seal, torturing herself over its contents ere she put a lighted match to the sheet, held between her fingers, and watched it slowly burn, without one quaver of remorse.

What must be her next step! How prevent this man going to Mona, even though no summons reached him! First, she must assure him of her sympathy.

"I am sorry I spoke as I did," she said to him, the day following her destruction of his letter. "Of course, I have never had the faith in Miss Foster that others have had. I have never forgiven it; but, I really think, poor girl, she has suffered very bitter punishment for her fault."

"Punishment!" he echoed. "She has done nothing to deserve punishment."

"You do not think then that she knew of this passage?"

Again the horrid doubt assailed him. Whence did it come!

"She could not have known it," he answered, loyally.

"But she did know of it for all that," replied Kate. "You thought me very hard on the night she roused the house by her scream of terror. Only a few moments before she cried out, I had had occasion to go down into the library. To my surprise, I found a man seated there—Rob Foster. I was very much terrified, but he reassured me by telling me who he was, and that he was expecting his daughter. Of course, I did not dream then how he had obtained entrance. Later, I knew her terror was assumed, but did not imagine the extent of her treachery, and out of pity did not wholly expose her. I have no doubt she devised the scheme to terrify Claire as well. Who else could have taken advantage of the legend of the house?"

Unflinchingly Kate told her unvarnished falsehood, narrowly watching the while her listener's face.

It grew very white, and beneath the heavy moustache his lips quivered.

"Miss Mayhew," he said, rising to his feet, "only from her own lips will I hear Miss Foster's condemnation. I wait only her permission to go to her protection, with the rights of her future husband."

"Her future husband!" Kate repeated, as though not able to conceal her amusement at the words. "Ave you mad! Do you mean to say that you would give to this disgraced girl, tainted by the polluted air of a prison, your honoured name? Tell me you did not mean it, Alton. In pity, tell me!"

She clasped his hand in her detaining grasp, raising to his face eyes swimming in tears. It were as though she had thrown off a mask no longer to be supported—that she had let drop the cloak of concealment at his feet; as though these words were trembling on her lips—

"Look at me! I love you—I do you realise it?—I who am an heiress, with position and wealth at my command! Will you resign me for this beggar—this disgraced daughter of a doubly disgraced father!"

The silence about them seemed to breathe the muttered words. He could hear her quick fevered breathing.

Lower and lower she bent her head, until the light, perfumed hair brushed the hand she still held. Its touch awakened his senses. Again in

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Russia has probably the most curious tax in the world. It is called the "amusement tax," and was instituted a year or two ago to found an institution for the poor, under the title of the "Empress Marie Foundation." The tax is laid upon every amusement ticket sold, and the managers raise the price accordingly. Already more than 1,000,000 roubles have been raised in this way.

the grey light of the early dawn he saw Mona's pale, beautiful face, and heard her whispered words—

"My love! my love!"

Gently, but firmly, he released himself from Kate's hold.

"Would I give her my name?" he said, very slowly. "Aye, in this very moment, though we were made one within the prison's gloom. The prison! The word maddens me. I can hardly wait the summons which will take me to her."

"The summons which will never come!" echoed the blonde, when alone. "Ah, Alton Ayre, drop by drop the water wears away the stone; drop by drop shall the waters of doubt assail the citadel of your confidence. I have staked my all. I must win! I shall win!"

(To be continued.)

FACETIE.

"Will ye be ather goin' to Mickey Doolan's wake to-night?" "Arrah, no! My fightin' days are over."

WILLIE: "Pa, what's an autocrat?" Pa: "A woman twenty minutes after she has promised to love, honour, and obey."

AUNTIE: "Do you like Uncle Harry to ride on his back?" Tommy: "Oh, rather; but I had a ride on a real donkey yesterday."

STRAWBER: "Why do you think you will have any trouble in keeping the engagement secret?" Singlerley: "I had to tell the girl, didn't I?"

HE: "How much more would you love me if my salary is raised?" She: "It would depend upon the rise."

HE: "Your dearest friend, Marie, told me all about you, yesterday." She: "And you still love me!"

MISS PASSAY: "I dread to think of my fortieth birthday. Miss Peri; "Why? Did something unpleasant happen then?"

WIFE: "Tommy doesn't seem to be afraid of policemen. Husband: "Why should he? His nurse was a very pretty girl."

CUSTOMER (to baker's boy): "Is your bread nice and light?" Baker's boy (confidentially): "Yes ma'am; it only weighs ten ounces to the pound."

IRASCIBLE LIEUTENANT (down engine-room tube): "Is there a blithering idiot at the end of this tube?" Voice from the engine-room: "Not at this end, sir."

"Do you believe in hero-worship?" inquired the singularly self-confident young man. "I do," replied Miss Cavenne; "excepting when it takes the form of self esteem."

ACTOR: "I can't imagine how D'Art manages to get such favourable notices from the dramatic critics." Journalist: "Perhaps he acts well." Actor: "By Jinks! I never thought of that."

CLARA: "You may talk about your French descent as much as you please, but I am contented to be a plain American." Marie: "Well, let us be thankful you are no plainer."

LITTLE BROTHER (bedtime): "Why don't you take your stockings off?" Little Sister (whose mother buys the cheap black kind): "I've got all of 'em off 'at will come off."

"True," said Mr. Fitter, "is the picture of the only girl I ever loved." "How cleverly," said Miss Wyse, as she looked at the portrait, "they do get up these composite photographs!"

JOHNNY: "It was a dreadful day the last time I went to grandma's. It blowed and it— Mother: "Is blowed is not proper. Say it blew." Johnny: "It blew and it snow awful."

WIFE: "What would you do if you had no wife to look after your mending, I'd like to know!" Husband: "Do! Why, in that case I could afford to buy new clothes."

HE: "Your husband is strictly businesslike, I understand." She: "Yes; whenever he receives a letter from me, he first reads the postscript to see how much money I want."

OFFICE BOY: "May I have this afternoon, sir? I want to see the League match." Employer (in surprise): "What! Has the last of your relatives been buried?"

"Yes," she said, "before we were married I used to admire John because I thought he was so noble. And now I admire him because he is such a splendid humbug!"

BERTHA: "I knew you were a literary man, Mr. Scribbler, the first time I saw you." Mr. Scribbler: "Did my countenance shine?" Bertha: "No, but your coat did."

"I HAD supposed, until yesterday, doctor, that the days of the bleeding of patients were past." "And so they are. But what changed your mind?" "The bill you sent me."

AWK-STRUCK VISITOR: "It must be very difficult to produce such an exquisite work of art." Artist: "Nonsense. Almost anybody can paint a picture; but finding a victim to buy it after it is painted is where the art comes in."

SHE: "After we are married we must economise. I shall bake my own bread, dear." He: "Very well, darling; if you really want to do it, I won't object; but you shan't bother your little head about baking mine."

"You say he ground his teeth after she gave him a stony stare," said the Fretful Boarder. "Did he have a whetstone in his pocket?" "No," said the Cheerful Idiot. "He ground them on the stony stare."

CLARA: "Are you not afraid, Maud, to marry old Dodderley. I hear he gets horribly jealous without any cause." Maud: "Don't be anxious, dear; I'll take care he never does that."

MAMMA: "Bessie, how many sisters has your new playmate?" Bessie: "He has one, mamma. He tried to fool me by saying that he had two half-sisters, but he didn't know that I've studied arithmetic."

MAGISTRATE: "The assault you have committed on your poor wife is a most brutal one. Do you know of any reason why I should not send you to prison?" Prisoner: "If you do, your honour, it will break up our honeymoon."

FATHER: "My son, I must again caution you to live within your means." Son: "Has anybody been sending you my bills?" Father: "Not yet, but you have been heard saying, 'How-dydo!' to two dukes and an earl."

"DEAR FATHER, we are all well and happy. The baby has grown ever so much, and has a great deal more sense than he used to have. Hoping the same of you, I remain your daughter, Mollie."

AFTER a recent railway collision a Scotsman was extricated from the wreckage by a companion who had escaped unhurt. "Never mind, Sandy," his rescuer remarked, "it's nothing serious, and you'll get damages for it." "Damages!" roared Sandy. "Hae I no' had enough? Guid sakes, it's repairs I'm seekin' noo!"

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SOCIETY.

The work of selecting Christmas presents for the Queen's large circle falls largely upon Princess Henry of Battenberg.

The Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Hesse are going to St. Petersburg on a visit to the Emperor and Empress of Russia.

The Duke of Connaught is to visit Khartoum, and will spend several weeks in Egypt, the Duchess and her daughters remaining at Florence, where he will rejoin them when he returns to Italy. The Duke will pay a visit to the King and Queen of the Hellenes at Athens.

During her recent visit to the Holy Land her Majesty the German Empress was so delighted with the graceful flowing lines of the Bedouin costume, that she requested the wife of the Governor of Lebanon to procure one for her. The garment, which will, of course, be absolutely correct in every detail, is being built by a firm of ladies' outfitters in Beyrout.

The Queen may possibly come to Buckingham Palace for a couple of nights on February 27th or 28th, in which case her Majesty will receive the Corps Diplomatique, the Ministers, and the entire company at the first Drawing Room. Princess Christian is to hold the two Drawing Rooms before Easter for the Queen.

A very pretty fashion is in process of revival. It is the practice of carrying a pomander, or perfume ball, attached to a chain. In the days of powder and patches and fans every lady—and for that matter many gentlemen—carried one of these pretty trifles. Of course, where it was possible, they were jewelled, several beautiful specimens of which are extant. Their primary use was, of course, to ward off infection, but they came to be mere perfume receptacles, and as such they are being revived.

Officials in Holland are at present engaged in settling the future rank and precedence of Prince William of Wied. It is improbable that the Prince will be created a King Consort, the last personage who bore that title having been the grandfather of the present King of Portugal, who was a member of the Hungarian branch of the Saxe-Coburg-Gotha family, and a first cousin of the Queen and of Prince Albert. It is expected that Prince William will be naturalised in Holland, and that the Queen will then issue Letters Patent declaring him to be a member of the Dutch Royal Family, and giving him the precedence due to his position. The Dutch experts in constitutional law are believed to be in favour of following the precedent which was created in 1840 when the Queen married Prince Albert under precisely similar circumstances. A Regency Bill will have to be passed directly after the Queen's marriage, and if the English precedent of 1840 is followed, Prince William will be named Regent if Queen Wilhelmina dies leaving children.

PRINCESS HENRY OF BATTENBERG recently made a pretty fancy waterpaper holder for the reception of the major part of the Queen's correspondence. The outside of the holder is of cardinal velvet with cords in shades of cardinal and gold, with four large rosettes worked with gold cord, with two inch cardinal ribbon to match two inches wide, with which the bows which ornament the handles are made. The foundation is made with eight pieces of millboard measuring twenty inches long and thirteen inches wide. Two stout pieces of millboard are used for the bottom, which is covered with cardinal velvet. There are four vandykes of lace—one on either side—and the rosettes cover the bottom points of the lace, being sewn exactly at the tip of the vandyke to the cardinal velvet just below it. The handles are made of two pieces of stout rope work about eight inches long, each of which is run into the casing used for the rosettes. The handles are tightly sewn to the cardboard, the stitches being kept as far as possible between the holes of the lace vandykes. The panels are brought upwards, and are sewn together down the sides, the cord being finally added, which makes the seams neat, and hides the stitches.

STATISTICS.

MORE than a million cigarettes are smoked in London every day.

An average of 26,000 letters are posted without addresses in England every day.

IRELAND sends annually 40,000 tons of eggs—some 640,000,000 in round numbers—to England alone.

A PROFESSOR estimates that the black race embraces about one-tenth of the inhabitants of the globe, or 150,000,000 persons.

SMOKING a pipe of medium size, says a statistician, a man blows out of his mouth every time he fills the bowl 700 smoke-clouds. If he smokes four pipes a day for 20 years, he blows 20,440,000 smoke-clouds.

GEMS.

PREJUDICE does truth more harm than falsehood.

PREJUDICE is a fog which obscures the virtues of those we do not like.

SEEK where a road ends before you take it, and to what an action leads before you begin it.

BETTER make of every sorrow a stepping stone to higher, nobler thought and deed than to hang it against you heart to weigh you down into the slough of despond.

REMEMBER that every trial we bear, however hard and cruel it may seem, is sent to teach us some useful lesson if we will only have the sense and patience to learn.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

TO REMOVE CANDLE GREASE FROM DRESSES.—For this nothing is better than the old-fashioned remedy of blotting-paper and a moderately hot iron. Put clean blotting-paper under and over the grease, and iron. Change the blotting-paper often, and continue till no greasy stain is left upon it.

RICH FRITTERS.—Take about half a pint of cold, boiled rice, and mix with it two tablespoonfuls of flour and a little salt. Beat up an egg, white and yolk separately, and add to a gill of milk. Beat all well together, flavour with essence of vanilla, form into flat fritters, and drop into boiling lard. Fry till a golden brown, dry near the fire, and just before serving sift white sugar over. Serve with a good chocolate or cream sauce.

PICKLED CAULIFLOWERS.—Cut the cauliflowers into little flowerets of equal size. Throw them into boiling salted water. Place them at the back of the range, and when they are just about to boil take them off and drain them. Put them into jars. Boil (about fifteen minutes) enough vinegar to well cover them, seasoning it with one ounce of nutmeg, one ounce of mustard-seed and half an ounce of mace to three quarts of vinegar. Pour this hot over the cauliflowers, adding a little sweet oil the last thing, to cover the top. Cover them, while warm, with a bladder.

BONE SOUP.—Obtain three pennyworth of bones from fresh meat, a pennyworth of pot-herbs—carrot, turnip, onion, &c.—salt, pepper, water, and three-quarters of a pound of flour. Break the bones, take out the marrow, put them in a pot with a tablespoonful of salt and half a gallon of water. Boil for six hours, adding more water if necessary. Take out the bones, and pour out the liquor into a pan and set it aside to cool during the night. Next day boil the stock, bones, and the pot-herbs, prepared in the usual way. Make small dumplings with the marrow, some of the fat skimmed off the soup on the previous day, the flour, salt, and a little stock to moisten; boil them in the soup for twenty minutes, and serve. This soup with dumplings will make a good dinner for a poor family.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE coins of Siam are made of porcelain; those of Japan are made principally of iron.

RUSSIAN battle-songs are written in minor keys, and instead of being brilliantly martial, are sad, telling of the soldier's fate.

OSTRICHES have the greatest contempt for Kaffirs and Hottentots, and attack them much more readily than they do white men.

THE aboriginal population of Australia is dying so rapidly that it has been proposed to establish reservations where the remnants can be instructed in agricultural labour and cared for.

DREWS are less abundant on islands than on ships in mid-ocean. Seamen can therefore tell when they are nearing land by reason of the smaller deposit of dew on the vessel.

MALE corpses float on their faces, and female corpses on their backs on account of the different dispositions of fatty tissues. In the case of a lean woman and a fat man the positions would be reversed.

THE King of Annam has an original idea in the way of a strong-box. He has the trunks of trees hollowed out, filled with gold and silver, and flung into his private lake, where a large number of crocodiles ward off intruders.

IN certain conditions of the atmosphere electricity is so abundant on the top of the volcano Mauna Loa, in Hawaii, that an English geologist found that he could trace electric letters with his fingers on his blanket.

WEDDING presents originated in a feudal tribute from the vassals to their lord. When feudalism ceased the presents became voluntary. In the days of Queen Elizabeth a pair of knives or scissors were a common gift, and symbolised the cutting of unfaithful love.

OUR English chefs might take a hint from the Japanese cooks, who never use the fingers in the preparation of food. Chopsticks, spoons, and a score of other ingenious little utensils in white wood do the work, which is of the most elaborate nature, many of the dishes requiring twenty-four hours for their preparation.

A PAINT idea may be formed of the extent to which Sebastopol was fired upon by the allied armies and fleets during the Crimean War when it is stated that from the tax of sixpence a hundredweight which the Russian Government levied upon the proceeds of the sales of old iron, shot, and shell picked up and sold by the people a sum of nearly £15,000 was realised.

THE South American puma is the only beast of prey invariably friendly to man, not excepting cats and dogs, which latter are always likely to become enemies to man on returning to their savage state. The puma, though savage towards other animals, is always kindly disposed towards man, and when attacked by a human being, instead of defending itself, will utter piteous cries, as though deploring its assailant's unfriendliness.

It has been the custom in order to obtain gutta serena to make incisions into the trees and utilise the exudations therefrom, which accumulated in large lumps or cakes. This continuous bleeding to which the tree was subjected finally destroyed it. Latterly the leaves of the tree have been used, and it is found that they not only furnish an article superior in quality to that obtained by the old process, but that this can be secured without injury to the tree itself. Orchards of these trees are set out and must be renewed at intervals in order to keep up the supply. The product obtained from the leaves is less expensive and of very much higher grade than any previously secured. It is usable for much more delicate work than the ordinary gutta serena, is more elastic and resists the action of the strongest acids. Unlike the ordinary commercial product, it has a high value even in the last stages of its usefulness. Twenty-five per cent. of the original value of the material has been paid for scraps, refuse and worn-out articles. The advantages of this new discovery are a finer article at less cost and a material that has a high cash value as long as a bit of it is left.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. N.—The marriage is perfectly valid.

A. E.—The first year of the twentieth century will be 1901.

PAID.—Application can only be made through a solicitor.

L. B.—Agnes is from the German and means "chaste."

OLD READER.—The distance from London to Peking is 11,770 miles.

BREXWARD.—You need not comply with his demand until he does so.

JANE.—White of egg, with plaster of Paris stirred in, mends broken china.

A. B.—The voyage from England to Bombay occupies about seventeen days.

AGATHA.—Woman's hair usually begins to grow grey when she is about thirty-five.

D. AND E.—Yes, such a marriage would be perfectly legal. We are always glad to be of service to our readers.

K. P.—Indian clubs and dumb-bells are excellent things for developing the muscles; but you should be careful not to have them too heavy.

R. E.—The Sanctuary Lamp, though not general in the Church of England, is to be found, we believe, in all the Roman and Greek Churches.

ROSE.—The young man may bring an action for breach of promise against you, but by so doing he will make himself look supremely ridiculous.

BETTY.—Clean with warm soap-and, and rinse with warm water and ammonia; then rub them over with whitening tied up in a piece of muslin, and polish with a camellia skin.

FRANK.—You cannot be very hard hit if you are in doubt whether you are really fond of the young lady or not after knowing her so long and having been in her society so much.

MARIE.—As you are unable to decide which of the two young men to accept, we should advise you to accept neither, as it is evident that your affections are not deeply enlisted.

CONSTANT READER.—The eldest son takes the whole of the freehold, the widow one-third of the personal property, the remaining two-thirds being divided equally between all the children.

ARABELLA.—First wash it with hot soap-and, dry and cover with a thick paste made of whitening and water, letting it dry up. Then rub off with a piece of flannel, and lastly with camellia skin.

MICHAEL.—The hair should always be well-brushed for five or ten minutes twice a day. It keeps it glossy and makes it grow. Even if it falls out very much it should be well brushed just the same.

J. B.—Thoroughly sprinkle every part with hot flour and sand and brush well with a hard brush. Then beat with a cane, comb it smooth with a wet comb, and press it carefully with a warm iron.

J. F.—The camels are usually identified with Switzerland, but the animal is less common there than in any other country which it inhabits. Austria is the real home of the camels, where they are most plentiful.

QUEST.—The lines
"Some roses of Eden are left to us yet,
But the trail of the serpent is over them all,"
are from "Paradise and the Peri," by Thomas Moore.

V. Y.—The famous old city of Ghent, Belgium, is built on twenty-six islands, which are connected with one another by eighty bridges. Three hundred streets and thirty public squares are contained in these islands.

SCIENTIFIC.—Three places at least are known where green snow is found. One of these is near Mount Hood, Iceland, another fourteen miles east of the mouth of the Ork, and the third near Quito, South America.

M. A.—There are several inferior qualities sold, which should never be used. When you require the black, rub it out in a tiny saucer, pretty thick, in a little water, but this enough to flow easily and evenly from the brush.

JO.—Dissolve sealing wax in spirits of wine, breaking up the wax for the purpose, and apply the solution, shaking it well up each time. Use a soft brush when applying. The spirits will evaporate, while the coating of wax remains.

SELINA.—Having tampered with the spots on your dress with the wrong substance, it will not be possible to remove them by any application known to us. At a regular cleaning establishment the original colour of the goods might possibly be restored.

ANT.—A good method to raise damaged velvet pile up again is as follows: Cover a hot iron with a wet cloth, lay the velvet or plush over it and beat carefully with a clothes brush. Lay the stuff on a smooth place and do not touch until it is quite dry.

M. F.—The safest and cheapest is the juice from a freshly-cut raw onion rubbed in each night, and when after a more or less number of nights the place begins to smart, stop it for a week or two; then apply as before, but only every four or five days.

IGNORANCE.—An optimist is one who, believing that all things are ordered for the best, looks upon the bright side of life, however discouraging the aspect of the hour. A pessimist is a person who takes a gloomy view of things in general, and is given to forebodings and doubts.

TROUBLED.—Warts generally show a weak state of health, and therefore medical advice may be needed. For a local application, try covering them with a pinch of baking soda, and then moistening it with vinegar. Leave on for ten minutes. Repeat this application till the warts wither away.

ROSE.—The indiscriminate use of dumb-bells, although they are calculated to strengthen the muscles of the arms and to expand the chest, frequently gives rise to much mischief. The person who commences to use these instruments without calculating their weight, subjects the muscular system to a strain that it is not prepared to meet.

GRACEFUL.—Put the breadths on a soft blanket; then take some stale bread-crumbs and mix with them a little powder blue. Rub this thoroughly and carefully over the whole surface with a piece of clean linen, shake it off, and wipe with soft cloths. Satin looks better when brushed the way of the nap with a soft hair brush.

INQUIRITIVE.—The origin of the word "windfall," as expressing an unexpected piece of good fortune, is, we are informed, from a certain old custom by which several of the English nobility held their estates on condition that the trees were to be reserved for the use of the navy; but such as fell by the wind became the property of the landlord.

LAUREL.—To every quart of hot (not warm) water add one teaspoonful of salad oil; wash the leather well through this, using plain primrose soap for the dirty portions; if necessary, rinse in a second supply of hot water and oil; wring, shake out and place near, but not close, to a fire to dry. It is only when the leather is very dirty that the second water is required.

SHIPWRECK WOOD.

See how the freight flashes on the pans;
Look how it flickers on the rafters round!
That almost gives its brightness back again,
So far the darkling shadows hold aloof.
See how it dances—and the warmth is good;
But all my fire is made of shipwreck wood.

Jim brought these furs from his first voyage back;
Will found them these beads, one day, at Hainore;
And the gold band that clasp my ruffles, Jack,
Bought me with half his pay at Singapore.
Each speaks of love and strength and hardihood;
But all my fire is made of shipwreck wood.

The sea is roaring over "wandering graves,"
Where all my best and bravest lie at peace;
I hear a requiem in the moaning waves.
That only with my parting breath will cease,
The sea has given me work and warmth and food;
But all my fire is made of shipwreck wood.

AMBITIOUS.—The dramatic profession is much crowded, the work hard, the season short, the rewards few, and it may safely be said that there is room only at the top. Unless you have decided talent for the stage, you are better off where you are. The stage offers no inducements equal to those you already possess.

DOUBTFUL.—The greeting in either way is not necessary, although in some houses it is habitually employed. Whether used or not is entirely according to the mistress's pleasure, and by her silence on each occasion, she can put an end to it when felt to be an annoyance, as is often the case. On the other hand, if she pleases, she can herself use it each morning, but there is no rule whatever about it.

MICRO.—Benzine is the best vehicle for the removal of grease spots from cloth and woollen articles. Place a piece of blotting-paper under the article to be cleaned; then rub upon the spots some pure benzine, and the grease or dirt will disappear quickly. Do not forget to place the blotting-paper under the garment to be operated upon, as otherwise a circular stain will remain, which cannot be removed.

QUEST.—If it was a mutual arrangement, and you still remain good friends, it would not be "forward" of you to send the young man a birthday card, but he would probably rather you did not. Such little intimacies should be broken off with the engagement, and you can be quite sufficiently friendly without sending one another such tokens as are generally only exchanged between relatives, friends of your own sex, or lovers.

C. K.—Your safest plan is to remove the frame and dust it well; then proceed by moistening the ball of the thumb of your right hand. Keep rubbing with it till you loosen and raise the varnish, which will soon begin to come off in a powdery stuff. Work at about six inch square at a time, always remembering that your object is to remove the dirty varnish without in the least rubbing or injuring the colours when you reach them. You must therefore be very careful as you work down near the colours, yet all the old varnish must be removed from them. It requires time and patient care. When all is removed the painting is cleaned. To re-varnish, you must work in a warm room, free from dust, brushing the best mastic varnish over the picture.

K. C.—Scrape off the loose candle grease on the surface, then well rub each spot with a piece of hard soap, and when well soaped in this way, wash it out with a brush and cold water, and dry each spot as you go along before you leave it. In some cases soap is not used, but in place of it, a mixture is made up of Fuller's earth, gall, and water, and this is well rubbed in, then well washed out with clean water, and, as before, each spot well dried before passing on.

J. E.—Dry some calcined magnesia thoroughly by heating it, and when cold mix with benzine, so as to make a dry paste. Press it in a meat press, and then put the mass into a bottle. To remove a stain, spread a layer of powder and rub with the finger; the benzine dissolves the fat in the stain, and the cloth or material should then be cleaned with a brush. Repeat the operation several times for old stains. Except in the case of wool, to which magnesia adheres, stains can be easily removed from cotton, silk, ivory and paper.

SCOFFER.—It is a most simple matter, when you know how, to make the spasm let go its hold. Provide yourself with a good strong cord, and when the cramp comes on, take the cord, wind it round the leg over the place that is cramped, and taking an end in each hand, give it a sharp pull, one that will hurt a little. The cramp will instantly vanish, and the sufferer can go to bed assured that it will not visit him again thus.

HATTIE.—To every fourteen pounds of plums allow eight pounds of sugar, four ounces of cinnamon in the stick, four ounces of cloves, two quarts of vinegar, and half an ounce of mace. Have a pan and put in a layer of plums, then a layer of spices, and so on till all is used. Stir the sugar into the vinegar, make it very hot, and pour over the plums; cover and place by the fire for six hours. Then put into a preserving kettle, and bring to boiling point altogether. Put into glass jars and seal.

YOUNG MOTHER.—In the first instance great care must be taken with the diet of the little ones. If they are properly fed they are much better able to resist the cold. Milk should be given in large quantities, because it is a heat-giver, as are also cocoa, butter, oil, sugar, and plenty of wheat-meal. Never take a child out with an empty stomach, but when the meal is just being digested. This will be about an hour after eating. All food should be given warm, as it is much easier to digest.

HENRI.—Place a small comb through the pile under the part affected, so as to separate it as much as possible from the rest of the pile of nap of the cloth; then cover the varnish stain with butter till you soften it. When softened, apply spirits of turpentine to remove butter and softened varnish; after that apply a little diluted benzine and sponge with water, and so proceed till you get all the stain away, being very careful not to pull or drag the fabric in any way during the delicate process. If, after all is dry, the pile should lie flat or uneven, steam it from the spout of a kettle, if necessary, helping lightly with a brush till it stands up evenly.

L. S.—The most satisfactory way is to put the grapes in a granite kettle with one-half deep of water for each four quarts, boil until soft, strain through a jelly bag, pressing through all that will come, boil a few minutes, add as much sugar as juice and boil ten minutes. This is very dark and rich, and takes the place of grape jam without the addition of the useless seeds and skins. To make very nice grape jelly put the grapes in a jar, place it in a kettle of boiling water, boil until soft, put in a jelly bag, let drain, but do not press. Add an equal quantity of sugar and boil ten minutes. What remains in the jelly bag may be made into sauce by the addition of water and sugar and boiling a few minutes.

HOUSEWIFE.—Take as much soft soap as will lie on a shilling, and mix it gradually with half a pint of soft water; put the mixture into a bottle and shake it up well; then add half a wineglassful of spirits of turpentine, and again well shake the ingredients. Brush the frame over with this liquid, taking care, however, to use for that purpose the very softest camel-hair brush that can be procured. After the liquid has been on the frame for a minute or two, use a slight brushing to the dirtiest and most lubricated parts of the work. It should be freely washed off with plenty of clean soft water, and the frame allowed to dry in a draught or where the sun shines on it. Next day the frame should be rubbed with a new wash leather. Pictures and glasses should be taken out of the frames during the cleansing process.

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